HAYAGRĪVA IN SOUTH INDIA

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HAYAGRĪVA
IN SOUTH INDIA

Complexity and Selectivity
of a Pan-Indian Hindu Deity

BY

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In the memory of my grandmother
Jaswant Kaur Nayar

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PREFACE

The abundance of divine images, central to Hindu religiosity, provides a rich source for the study of continuity and change in Hinduism. This study examines the *complexity* and *selectivity* involved in the development of a relatively 'minor' pan-Indian deity—Hayagrīva—who, however, since the 14th century C.E. has been revered as a full form of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu in the local Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition of South India. More specifically, it focuses on the following tasks:

Firstly, the study investigates, both *diachronically* and *synchronically*, the complexity in respect of the images of Hayagrīva; it does so in terms of the three-fold division of Hindu texts: (1) pan-Indian 'mainstream' (Vedas, Epics, Purāṇas); (2) pan-Indian sectarian (Āgamas); and (3) regional sectarian (hymns of the Āḻvārs and Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas). This broader multi-dimensional methodology is used since it is felt that the employment of any single method, whether that of the structural approach or that of textual criticism, is limiting in that it leads to a simplification of the actual development of the deity and fails to reveal the complexity in respect of the images of Hayagrīva. In the process, it emerges that there is no single history of the deity, and that one can only speak of the various 'histories' of Hayagrīva.

Secondly, the study reconstructs the particular 'religious history' of Hayagrīva as he appears in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, more specifically as the presiding deity in the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram. The reconstruction brings out the selectivity regarding the materials borrowed from pan-Indian and local levels involved in the Śrīvaiṣṇava development of Hayagrīva as Supreme in Tamil Nadu. It also reflects the specific Śrīvaiṣṇava theological understanding of the five different forms the Supreme takes in five different locales (which I term as *topotheism*). It further demonstrates that (1) mythology is not simply an abstract historical or cyclical process, but may be purposively adapted in the service of theology, as in the case of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, and that (2) although a god's status may change according to sect, the emblems and functions of the different images may remain the same or similar.

Thirdly, in its investigation of the development of the depictions of Hayagrīva at the regional level, the study reveals the quest for pan-Indian legitimacy through the employment of imitative genres in the celebration of the deity. In this manner, it exposes to full view the bi-directional interaction between the regional and pan-Indian levels of Hinduism.

In the research and writing of this study, I have benefited from the help of many. First and foremost, I must express my gratitude to Dr. K.K.A. Venkatachari, founder and former Director of the Ananthacharya Indological Institute, Bombay, for having recommended Hayagrīva as a research topic. He kindly gave me his own copy of Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* in Sanskrit, which is otherwise difficult to obtain, and also accompanied me to Tiruvahīndrapuram, Tamil Nadu, for fieldwork in January 1997.

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Finally, I am indebted to my Indian grandmother, who, ironically, could neither read nor write but took great delight in her granddaughters being educated. With her wisdom and perseverance, she has always been an inspiration to me. In her own way, she taught me how to appreciate both wisdom and knowledge and the difference between the two.

Although indebted to many, I alone bear the responsibility for the final analysis.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF HAYAGRĪVA: FROM MINOR PAN-INDIAN DEITY TO SUPREME GOD IN THE SOUTH

The term 'Hinduism' has recently been a topic of much scholarly controversy. The most radical reconsideration is that by Heinrich von Stietencron. He argues that, because the term 'Hinduism' has been given by outsiders to refer to the religion of the majority of the people of the Indian subcontinent, it is erroneous to approach Hinduism as a single entity. Rather, he suggests that one ought to speak of a cultural matrix with many different religions.[1] In contrast, other scholars assert that 'Hinduism' should be considered as a "polythetic concept made up of a criss-cross of overlapping strands rather than a bounded unit possessing essential features" (Ferro-Luzzi)[2] or as "the religious network [of mutual interaction binding the components over thousands of years]" (Sontheimer)[3], even though it does not fit the Western definitions of religion. Indeed, it is commonly accepted that Hinduism has no founder, no creed, nor a governing organizational structure. Even though the Vedas are revered as 'Hindu scripture' and regarded as sacred and authoritative, in terms of the development of Hindu religion the actual influence of the Vedas is even debatable.[4] However, according to the Hindu world-view and its tendency

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[1] See Heinrich von Stietencron, "Hinduism: On the Proper Use of a Deceptive Term", in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, edited by Günther D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1989), pp. 11-27; and Robert Eric Frykenberg, "The Emergence of Modern 'Hinduism' as a Concept and as an Institution: A Reappraisal with Special Reference to South India" in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, pp. 29-49.

[2] Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi, "The Polythetic-Prototype Approach to Hinduism", in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, edited by Günther D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1989), pp. 187-195.

[3] Günther D. Sontheimer, "Hinduism: The Five Components and their Interaction", in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, edited by Günther D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1989), pp. 197-212.

[4] For a discussion on the relation of the Vedas to the Hindu tradition, see: Louis Renou, *Le Déstin du Veda dans l'Inde* (Paris: Adrien Maisouneuve, 1960); Brian K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Wilhelm Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection: Exploration in Indian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

to agglomerate dissent ideas, images, and rituals within a single religious complex, *one cannot speak of religions but rather Religion*, including the world religions, since all are but different perspectives on the one Reality. In this study, I use the term Hinduism as the complex network of the pan-Indian and local religious streams, the many sub-traditions or layers of thought and practice found among the majority peoples of India.

The absence of a founder, a single governing body, or a single authoritative text makes it nevertheless a challenge to study Hinduism. Unlike most world religions, there is no such historical reference point for tracing development or understanding continuity and change. Regardless of the absence of an historical founder or a founding doctrine, Hinduism nonetheless contains an abundance of divine images which are central to Hindu religiosity. The development of these divine images provides a rich source for the study of continuity and change in Hinduism.

Given the complexity of India's geographical and racial make-up, tracing the development of the various images, myths and beliefs regarding any Indian deity is a major undertaking. This is especially so, as in the present case, where the study focuses on a relatively 'minor' pan-Indian deity who at the same time is revered as Supreme in one region of India. To do some justice to the daunting task, it becomes necessary to analyse the deity from the perspectives of mythology, iconography, ritual, and theology, and all this both diachronically and synchronically. Treated thus, this analysis of Hayagrīva, by shedding light on the deity's multi-faceted transformation as it occurs among the various pan-Indian and local religious streams, should clarify, *without oversimplifying*, the many traditions or layers of thought and practice found in Hinduism.

Studying the development of Hayagrīva, 'one who has the neck of a horse' (*haya*=horse, *grīva*=neck),[5] is an endeavour of enormous complexity. Firstly, it is impossible to trace the precise origins of this figure, who *may* have antecedents as far back as the Brāhmaṇas. Secondly, the history of the deity spans at least two millenia, from the Hindu Epic

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[5] Although I use Hayagrīva ('one who has the neck of a horse') as the proper name of the deity under consideration here, there are other Sanskrit names frequently used to identify this figure: 'horse-faced one' as in *haya-vadana*, *haya-mukha*, *vāji-vaktra*, *vāji-vadana*, and 'one who has the head of a horse' as in *haya-śiras* and *aśva-śiras*. There are also two Tamil names used to denote the deity: *mā* 'horse', and *pari-muka* 'horse-faced one' (*pari*=horse, *muka*=face). In this study, I use the English 'horse-headed' god and the proper name Hayagriva as general terms. The former is not only more appropriate in terms of physical description than the 'the horse-necked one', it is also more commonly used in the texts themselves.

Mahābhārata up to the present, during which time there appear a multitude of sometimes contradictory references and images of Hayagrīva in mythic, iconographical, and ritual texts. Moreover (and most interesting from the standpoint of how religious transformation takes place in Hinduism), although Hayagrīva is a relatively minor deity in the pan-Indian corpus, as one of several important incarnations (*avatāra*) of Lord Viṣṇu, he is revered in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition of South India as a form of the Supreme God (*para*).[6]

1. HAYAGRĪVA IN HINDU LITERATURE

Major references to Hayagrīva are contained in the texts of Hindu religious literature, which may be divided into three broad categories: (1) pan-Indian 'mainstream' texts, including the Vedic corpus (*ṚgVeda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, the Āraṇyakas, the Brāhmaṇas, and the Upaniṣads) (*śruti*) as well as the Epics and the Purāṇas (*smṛti*); (2) pan-Indian sectarian texts, including the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra, Śaiva, and Śākta Āgamas; and (3) regional sectarian texts, such as the Tamil poems of the Āḻvārs and the varied compositions of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas.[7]

The first category in this three-fold division of Hindu texts (pan-Indian 'mainstream', *śruti* and *smṛti*) is widely recognized as sacred scripture throughout the subcontinent by most Hindu groups and sects. There are no specific references to the horse-headed figure in the *ṚgVeda*; however, the later Brāhmaṇas contain stories about the beheading sacrifice of Yajña and Viṣṇu (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*), which some have regarded as a direct antecedent to the later Purāṇic stories explaining the origins of a horse-headed being. In contrast, there are many references to, and several stories about, a horse-headed figure in the Epic and Purāṇic

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[6] See section 'The Śrīvaiṣṇava Tradition' in Chapter Five.

[7] There are no direct references to Hayagrīva in the *ṚgVeda* or Brāhmaṇas; however, there may be Brāhmaṇic antecedents to the deity. See Chapter Two. I have grouped all the Purāṇas together in the category of pan-Indian 'mainstream' texts (which refer to the Vedic, Epic and Purāṇic corpus). Since many of the Purāṇas are sectarian, it would be misleading and simplistic to categorize all the Purāṇas as pan-Indian trans-sectarian texts. However, it is necessary to group the trans-sectarian and sectarian Purāṇas together here for the purpose of providing a broader overview. I will present a more differentiated analysis of the development of the myths about Hayagrīva on the basis of the Purāṇas in Chapter Three. Even though the Āgamas are mainly found in Kashmir and the South, the term pan-Indian here refers to those Āgamic texts that are not clearly restricted to a single region.

texts. However, there is a lack of consistency in the treatment of his nature and role: the horse-headed figure is portrayed both as Viṣṇu's incarnation and, by way of contrast, as a demon whom Viṣṇu kills. An examination of these various texts about the horse-headed figure should not only contribute to a more adequate understanding of his nature and role, but it should also shed light on the interaction among different Indian sects and on Hinduism at large (based on the pan-Indian 'mainstream' texts). Furthermore, an analysis of the Hayagrīva myths should reveal the process of mythic transformation, in turn, reflecting theological developments within Hinduism, especially in respect of Vaiṣṇavism.

References to Hayagrīva are also contained in the pan-Indian sectarian Āgamic texts included in the second category. The Āgamas are particularly crucial to this study of Hayagrīva, because not only are the Āgamic traditions foundational for Hindu temple ritual and practice in South India,[8] but the Pāñcarātra Āgamic tradition has specifically been an important influence in the development of Śrīvaiṣṇavism (in which the major local tradition of Hayagrīva worship is found today). Moreover, there are significant references to, and depictions of, the deity in Śaiva and Śākta Āgamic literature, which show that similar motifs and paraphernalia exist among the various sectarian traditions. There are references to Hayagrīva in the Buddhist tradition as well. However, a survey of the Buddhist references and an analysis of the relationship between the Buddhist and Hindu textual traditions would be a study in itself; accordingly, I limit myself to only depictions of Hayagrīva in Hinduism.

In the last category of Hindu texts, that is, in the regional sectarian literature of Tamil Nadu, especially Śrīvaiṣṇava, specific references to Hayagrīva are also to be found. The earliest of these references are contained in the hymns of two of the Tamil poets known as the Āḻvārs (Nammāḻvār ca. 700 C.E. and Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār ca. late 700 C.E.). There is also a reference in the praise-poem (*stotra*) of an early Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya (Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, 12th century C.E.). More importantly, the most celebrated text on Hayagrīva in Śrīvaiṣṇavism was composed by Vedānta Deśika (ca. 1268-1371 C.E.), the eminent theologian, logician, and poet who resided in the town of Kāñcīpuram. Among his many compositions is

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[8] Vedic *yajña* has the status of being the foundation of Hindu ritual and may be revered for purposes of legitimacy, but temple rituals are founded on Āgamas/Purāṇas. The Āgamas are foundational to Hindu temple ritual in the South; the Purāṇas are the basis of temple worship in the North. The temple iconographical and ritual portions pertaining to Hayagrīva in the Purāṇas will also be discussed in Chapter Four.

the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, a thirty-two stanza Sanskrit praise-poem to Hayagrīva, which has been pivotal in the development of the contemporary worship of the deity as the Supreme God in the South Arcot district of Tamil Nadu. This devotional poem depicts Hayagrīva as the Possessor of wisdom, venerates Him for having recovered and restored the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha and, most centrally, designates Him as the Lord of Light and Learning.[9]

Consequent to Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*, the later literature of Tamil Nadu includes references to Hayagrīva in the book containing the local myths (*sthala-purāṇa*) of the Devanātha Temple at Tiruvahīndra-puram as well as in the devotional hymns praising the deity that follow Śrīvaiṣṇava (and Āgamic) ritual: the *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti* (*In Praise of the Śrī Hayagrīva Root Mantra*), the *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti* (*Self-Surrender to Hayavadana Accompanied by Śrī Lakṣmī*), and the *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana* (*Morning Prayer to Śrī Hayagrīva*).[10] As is frequently the case with the Hindu tradition, these three devotional works are viewed as unauthored, implying that their source is divine. Although it is difficult to date these devotional texts, they more than likely were composed no earlier than 13th century C.E. and perhaps not until the 17th-18th century C.E., an inference based in part on the fact that they celebrate the iconic form of Hayagrīva as the Supreme God—a later development in the Vaṭakalai or Northern sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism's history of the deity.[11]

There exist also five other ritual texts on Hayagrīva used by Vaṭakalai Śrīvaiṣṇavas which employ pan-Indian religio-literary genres and reflect the fluidity between pan-Indian and local traditions. The five short ritual texts that are specifically concerned with this incarnation, which have their roots in the Pāñcarātric tradition, are: the *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*, the *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Śat Nāma Arcanā* (*The Worship of the One Hundred and Eight Names of Hayagrīva*), the *Hayagrīva Kavaca* (*Hayagrīva*

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[9] See: Vedānta Deśika, *Stotras of Vedānta Deśika* (3rd. ed; Bombay: Sri Vedanta Desika Sampradaya Sabha, 1973); *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi* (Madras: Ubhaya Vedanta Granthamala, 1971), pp. 89-99; and *Śrī Hayagrīva-Paṭalam*, compiled by G.D. Somani (Bombay: n.p., n.d.), pp. 9-16.

[10] I have retained the word 'Śrī' as part of the titles of the Śrīvaiṣṇava texts (*Śrī Hayagrī-va Mūla Mantra Stuti*, *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti*, and the *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana*) because in this genre of literature posterior to Vedānta Deśika, Hayagrīva is, indeed, always accompanied by Śrī Lakṣmī.

[11] See Chapter Seven for information on the Vaṭakalai sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism.

[Protective] Shield), the *Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat*[12] (*Another Hayagrīva [Protective] Shield*), and the *Hayagrīva Pañjara* (*Hayagrīva-[Protective] Cage*). Similar to the Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional texts mentioned above, these five sectarian texts are unauthored. Although several of these ritual hymns are in pan-Indian genres (such as the Upaniṣad), they were most likely composed after Vedānta Deśika and the Vaṭakalai popularization of Hayagrīva as the Supreme God; that is, these Āgamic compositions most likely are posterior to the regional establishment of the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple.

   Since this study is concerned with the multi-faceted transformation and development of a Hindu deity, it is important to look first at the methodological issues that arise from a consideration of the work of previous scholars on the general topic of tracing the history of a deity in Indian religious texts.

2. Methodological Problems in Tracing the History of a Deity

There are two main reasons for the manifest complexity of, and thus the challenge in tracing, the historical development of an Indian deity: (1) India's long standing oral tradition, and (2) the various traditions in India which, however diverse, nonetheless selectively share similar beliefs, motifs and symbols.

2.1. *India's Long Standing Oral Tradition*

The influence of India's long standing oral tradition on written texts and the presence of residual orality in the reworking of written texts have made Indian textual research on the whole a formidable task. For the most part, the difficulty lies in identifying and grappling with the enormous corpus of extant literature that arises out of, and is based on, a predominantly oral tradition covering the great diversity of Hinduism. The Vedas are fixed revelation transmitted orally; however, the Epics, Purāṇas and Āgamas are fluid texts, of which there are different recensions found throughout the Indian subcontinent. This aspect of the existence of different recensions, in

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[12] I have kept the word 'Anyat' as part of the title of the *Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat* in order to distinguish it from the first *Hayagrīva Kavaca*.

effect, poses an enormous challenge in tracing the authenticity of, and in establishing an accurate date for, post-Vedic texts.

Although there is a variety of approaches to Hindu textual studies, the field is, in effect, dominated by two opposing schools of thought—the textual-critical and the structural. These two schools represent two radically different ways of dealing with a corpus of literature that contains many inconsistencies and contradictions. The one referred to as the textual-critical approach predominantly attempts to reconstruct the original version of a text (*Ur*-text) and then to discern its variants. This classical approach has been employed in the study of the Epics and Purāṇas in which 'authentic' portions of the text are distinguished from later additions; as such, it is used as a means to determine the complex chronology of the various Purāṇas.[13] The work of one Indologist, Paul Hacker, offers a modified textual-critical approach. He provides an analysis of religious terminology in order to build a relative chronology of the different variants of a mythic story, even as they are related to particular religious systems and developments within them.[14]

Whereas the textual-critical approach tries to discern the relative chronology of the Epic and Purāṇic myths, the opposing structural approach seeks to delineate the underlying structure of any given myth by a thorough study of its variants. By decoding mythemes—that is, breaking down the myths to their most basic units, and then indexing the basic units of the myth's variants—scholars following this approach, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, attempt to reconstruct the 'basic mythic structure'. The underlying meaning of any given myth is often interpreted as an expression of the tension between oppositions in human existence (such as life and death), which then is resolved through a reconciliation.[15]

In spite of the enormity of the corpus of Hindu mythic literature, the

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[13] The approach has been used primarily by European scholars during the first half of the twentieth century. See Frederick Eden Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1962 [1931]); and Willibald Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa: Versuch einer Textgeschichte* (Bonn: K. Schroeder, 1927).

[14] Paul Hacker, "Purāṇen und Geschichte des Hinduismus: methodologische, programmatische und geitesgeschichtliche", in *Kleine Schriften* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), pp. 1-7. Also see, Paul Hacker, *Prahlāda, Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt* 2 vols. (Mainz: F. Steiner, 1959); and Paul Hacker, "The Sankhyization of the Emanation Doctrine: Shown in a Critical Analysis of Texts", *Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sud-und Ostasiens* (Vol. 5, Vienna: 1961), pp. 75-112.

[15] See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning, Five Talks for Radio* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1978).

different recensions of individual texts or myths, and the difficulty in dating the various texts, scholars following the structural approach attempt to delineate the basic myth, its variants and its underlying structure, which constitute the topic of the next section.

2.1.1. *Oral Tradition and the Many Recensions*

Early scholars, such as Horace H. Wilson, believed that there was an original 'pure' Purāṇa. They subscribed to the 'expansion' hypothesis; that is, from this original Purāṇic text a group of Purāṇas evolved. The evolved Purāṇas, presumably based on their strong sectarian biases, were viewed as late and 'corrupt' versions of the 'original' one (eventually lost).[16] The extensive amount of sectarian content of the Purāṇas often led both early modern Indian scholars (e.g., Ram Mohan Roy) and European scholars (e.g., Horace Wilson) to determine their 'authenticity' in relation to an assumed original text before it was corrupted by later sectarian material.

By way of contrast, some scholars, such as Ludo Rocher, believe that there is no reason to presume that the sectarian portions of the Purāṇic texts are of late origin and, therefore, less authentic. According to Rocher, the Purāṇas may well have been originally compiled as sectarian compositions.[17] And even if there were earlier 'original' texts, there is no reason to suppose that they are any more authentic than the interpolated later ones. Though textual criticism as a means to reconstructing the relative chronology of Purāṇic texts and myths has recently been under question, given the fluid nature of Hindu literature (from oral tradition to written texts, and then back to oral tradition), Western scholars often prefer the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*. However, textual criticism of the Epics is also under re-evaluation, for some scholars think that Epic and Purāṇic literatures are simply oral traditions written down.[18]

The more recent collection of nine articles in *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts*, edited by Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty), is concerned with the problems of meaning and interpretation of the enormous corpus of Epic and Purāṇic literature.[19] With

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[16] Horace Hayman Wilson, *Analysis of the Purāṇas* (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1979).
[17] Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 18-20.
[18] Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 49-53.
[19] The first part, "From Vedic and Epic to Purāṇa and Upapurāṇa", illuminates the fluidity of the oral tradition and the relation among the Vedic, Epic and Purāṇic texts. The last part, "From Hindu to Jaina and Back Again", includes two articles that discuss the place of the Purāṇas in Jainism. Wendy Doniger (ed.), *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Trans-*

their different orientations, the volume's authors attempt to discern various mythic and literary patterns among the Purāṇas by looking at the 'intertextual' relations among their many layers— the classical Sanskrit, regional, and sectarian. Pertinent to the present study is the second section, "From South to North and Back Again", which contains essays that shed light on the fluid relationship between the classical and regional Sanskrit Purāṇas.[20] Because Epic and Purāṇic stories have been told and retold at different times by different groups on the Indian sub-continent, this feature of telling and retelling has inevitably resulted in many different recensions.

In the case of the Āgamic texts, which were originally transmitted orally, their inconsistencies lie in the fact that they were most likely detailed descriptions/prescriptions for specific temples, which then came to be written down in various texts into which was incorporated a sectarian theological world-view. Consequently, not only are there different recensions, but inconsistencies abound even within a single text. The interpolations make it difficult to trace the origins of a specific text. Because there are sometimes several recensions of a single text, their dating is also problematic. Furthermore, as pointed out by some scholars (Gonda, Sanderson), the dating of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (pertinent for this study on Hayagrīva) is even more problematic because there are no extant commentaries. The Pāñcarātra Āgamas have been transmitted primarily through the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, making it difficult to discern which texts originated outside South India (i.e., Kashmir, Orissa) and to date the early Pāñcarātra corpus.[21]

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formation in Hindu and Jaina Texts (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

   [20] Velcheru Narayana Rao's "Purāṇa as Brahminic Ideology" examines the *pañcalakṣa-ṇa* (the five distinguishing marks of the Purāṇas) as a brahminical ideological framework found in the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition, by investigating the Purāṇizing of the Telugu folk tradition. In the article "On Folk Mythologies and Folk Purāṇas", A.K. Ramanujan compares folk myths from Karnataka and Sanskrit Purāṇic mythology. David Schulman's "Remaking a Purāṇa: The Rescue of Gajendra in Potana's Telugu *Mahābhāgavatamu*" deals with the similarities and differences in depictions of two variants of the same myth in the Sanskrit and Telugu traditions. Friedhelm Hardy's article "Information and Transformation—Two Faces of the Purāṇas" examines the interaction between the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions.

   [21] Jan Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), pp. 51-56. Alexis Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", in *Les Sources et Le Temps*, edited by F. Grimal (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2001), pp. 1-47, especially p. 35.

2.1.2. *The Problem of Dating*

As aforementioned, in the attempt to distinguish 'authentic' portions from
later editions, classical textual criticism has been the basic methodology
used to date the Purāṇas. However, some scholars believe that textual
criticism's goal of dating and tracing the original portions of the Purāṇas
is simply futile. Furthermore, textual criticism is rejected as a viable means
for the reconstruction of the complex chronology of the various Purāṇas.
In fact, Rocher questions the supposition that, by comparing the different
versions of a text, one will be able to arrange them in a chronological or-
der to establish mythological developments.[22] On the other hand, some
scholars, such as Paul Hacker, have found that analysis of the development
of religious terminology can, indeed, be used to establish the relative
chronology of the variant Epic and Purāṇic myths and texts.

   The dating of the Epics, Purāṇas, and Āgamas has nevertheless proven
to be a difficult challenge. Although I am in basic agreement with Rocher's
criticism of the classical textual-critical method for the reconstruction of
a precise chronology of the Purāṇas, I do think that a general, if tentative,
notion of the chronology of the Indian texts facilitates any inter-textual
investigation, especially one that attempts both a diachronic perspective
and a synchronic perspective. This does not mean that there must be a
precise chronology of the Purāṇas and Āgamas. The development of a
single line of history in Hinduism can rarely be more than speculative.
However, a general chronology for the Epics, Purāṇas and Āgamas allows
one to better view each text within its own general, religio-historical
context.

2.1.3. *A General Chronology for the Hindu Texts*

It is possible to tentatively organize Hindu texts as belonging to several
general historical periods, as has been done below. Although it may seem
audacious, even within the specific periods I have placed the texts in what
I think to be their *probable* successive chronological order:

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[22] Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 97-98.

I.   Vedic period (1500-500 B.C.E.)[23]

     A.   early (1500-900 B.C.E.): *ṚgVeda*
     B.   later (900-500 B.C.E.): *Saṃhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas*,
             Upaniṣads

II.   Classical period (500 B.C.E.-500 C.E.)

     A.   Epics: *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṁśa*
     B.   Purāṇas[24]: *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *Matsya Purāṇa*

III.   Early Medieval period (500-800 C.E.)

     B.   Purāṇas: *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*
     C.   Āgamas[25]: *Sātvata Saṃhitā*, *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā*,
             Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā
     D.   Āḷvārs[26]: Nammāḻvār (early 700 C.E.), Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār
             (late 700 C.E.)

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[23] Currently, there is a major debate regarding the dating of the Vedas and *Mahābhārata*, including the defence of the traditional belief that the texts were much earlier than some scholars now hold. See Klaus Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 37-38, 416.

[24] The general chronological periods for the Purāṇas are based on a synthesis of Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of the Dharmaśāstras (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India)*, Vol. 5, Part 2 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1962),pp. 887-912; Wendy O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths.* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 16-18; Rajendra Chandra Hazra *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs* (Dacca: University of Dacca, 1940); and Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 134-270. In Chapter Three, I have in a note provided the sources for the more specific dates for each of the Purāṇas used in this study.

[25] The general chronological periods for the Āgamas are based on a synthesis of Mitsunori Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology, with a Translation and Critical Notes from Chapters on Theology in the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), pp. 34-35; and Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, pp. 93-105. In Chapter Four, I have in a note provided sources for the more specific dates for each of the Āgamic texts used in this study.

[26] The dating of the Āḷvārs who mention Hayagrīva is based on Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 267-269.

IV.   Middle Medieval period (800-1000 C.E.)

    B.   Purāṇas: *Agni Purāṇa, Garuḍa Purāṇa, Nārada Purāṇa, Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa*
    C.   Āgamas: *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā, Padma Saṃhitā, Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā, Nāradīya Saṃhitā, Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*(?)

V.   Late Medieval period (1000-1500 C.E.)

    B.   Purāṇas: *Brahma Purāṇa, Kālikā Purāṇa, Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*
    C.   Āgamas: *Śeṣa Saṃhitā*(?)*, Lakṣmī Tantra, Parāśara Saṃhitā, Īśvara Saṃhitā, Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā*
    E.   Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas[27]: Parāśara Bhaṭṭar (1122-1174 C.E.), Vedānta Deśika (1269-1370 C.E.)

2.2. *Tracing the Development of a Deity Amidst the Diversity of Religious Streams in India*

Besides the general problems relating to Indian textual studies, such as the dating of texts, there are also specific methodological problems in tracing the development of an Indian deity given the multi-faceted development of beliefs, images and practices among the various Indian religious streams. Although tracing the development of any Hindu deity is a complex process, when the god is a major one whose origins are agreed upon—as in the case of the Southern god Murukaṉ (studied by Fred Clothey)[28]—the process is

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[27] The dating of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas is based on Patricia Y. Mumme, *The Śrīvaiṣṇava Theological Dispute: Maṇavāḷamāmuni and Vedānta Deśika* (Madras: New Era Publications, 1988), p. 272.

[28] In *The Many Faces of Murukaṉ, The History and Meaning of a South Indian God*, Fred Clothey surveys Sanskrit and Tamil literature in order to identify the interchange of religious elements between the two traditions and their effect on the development of the god Murukaṉ. He uses an historical and phenomenological approach in the study of the symbols, images, motifs, and rituals connected with Murukaṉ, and demonstrates how the different images of Murukaṉ are influenced by the milieu in which they exist. Using broad historical periods in his analysis of the development of Murukaṉ, Clothey shows that the deity does not reflect a single culture, but rather a variety of 'ecological situations' and the changes and adaptations resulting from the decline of old elements and the rise of new ones. Clothey, *The Many Faces of Murukaṉ: The History and Meaning of a South Indian God* (The Hague:

somewhat simpler than when one is dealing with the history of a relatively minor pan-Indian god whose origins are not known with certainty. Such is the case with Hayagrīva who, recognized as a relatively minor deity in the pan-Indian context, began to be recognized as the Supreme God in the South during the late medieval period (ca. 13th C.E. century onwards). Before proceeding to a more intensive investigation of that deity, it is necessary to survey these problems pertaining to the tracing of the historical development of a deity made evident in previous studies that are pertinent to the tracing of the development of Hayagrīva. The specific problems relate to: (1) the tracing of the origins/antecedents of the deity, and (2) the complexity of the process of development resulting from interaction among a variety of traditions.

2.2.1. *Origin of Deity/Antecedents to the Deity*

Scholars have often tended to trace the antecedents of pan-Indian deities back to the Vedic corpus. Some scholars of Hindu mythology (Biardeau, O'Flaherty) have limited their studies to the Vedic, Brāhmaṇic, Epic, and Purāṇic literatures, disregarding the possibility that origins may, in fact, be traceable to non-Sanskritic traditions. Although Vedic antecedents may be apparent, one cannot assume that the Vedas are necessarily the sole or even the earliest antecedent to religious developments simply because they are the earliest religious compositions in the pan-Indian 'mainstream' Sanskrit tradition. It is plausible that many elements from outside the pan-Indian mainstream have been influential in the development of Hinduism, such as the religious practices and beliefs coming through the Āgamic stream, only later written down and 'Vedicized' in the form of the Āgamas (ca. 500 C.E.).[29] This raises sharply the issue of origins, especially in view of the complexity of India evident in the multiple ethnic groups and in the several families of languages and their regional variations.

Many scholars who have studied Indian deities have limited themselves to a textual study of the pan-Indian 'mainstream' literature; a few, however, have gone outside these texts to make other claims as to the origin and

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Mouton, 1978).

[29] According to K.K.A. Venkatachari, many Āgamic practices appear to have originated in the indigenous (Dravidian) tradition. See K.K.A. Venkatachari, "The Śrī Vaiṣṇava Āgamas", in *National Seminar on the Contributions of the Tamils to Indian Culture* (forthcoming; Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies). For an elaboration of his study, see 'Hayagrīva's Possible Non-Vedic Origin(s)' in Chapter Two.

development of deities. For example, regarding Gaṇeśa, Alice Getty argues that one cannot know whether Gaṇeśa is an original deity or a derivative from tribal totems,[30] while Paul Courtright notes that tracing the origin of Gaṇeśa can be nothing more than speculative, and offers the hypothesis that the Gaṇeśa figure emerged during the textual transition from sacrificial ritual to temple worship.[31] Moreover, Suvira Jaiswal claims that Hayagrīva originated as a tribal deity in Assam. After observing the worship of Hayagrīva in the tribal hills of Assam (specifically Maṇikūṭa Hill), Jaiswal states that the figure found today in pan-Indian Hinduism originated in the beliefs and traditions of the indigenous tribes of Assam. According to her interpretation, Hayagrīva was worshipped on Maṇikūṭa Hill as an indigenous demonic figure of fever, then incorporated into Mantrayāna Buddhism (Buddhist texts ca. 7th-8th century C.E. in which mantras, *mudrās* and *maṇḍalas* are central), and only then gradually transformed and incorporated into the pan-Indian Hindu texts (as both demon and deity) as well as into the Vaiṣṇava tradition.[32]

In the case of Hayagrīva, even if possible antecedents can be theoretically traced back to the Brāhmaṇas, such as his association with the Vedic sacrifice and the beheading of Viṣṇu (see Chapter Two), this may still have been simply a means of incorporating local deities into the mainstream Sanskritic tradition. The precise relationship between the pan-Indian Sanskrit and regional traditions is often difficult to discern, and it raises important questions for the exploration of the Hindu tradition at large. For example, what is the influence of other religious streams on the

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[30] Alice Getty's study is a foundational work on Gaṇeśa, one of the more frequently stu-died of the Hindu deities. In her analysis, Getty traces the change and transformation of Gaṇeśa in India and throughout East and Southeast Asia in the light of iconography (texts, icons, sculptures and paintings) and Tantrism (Hindu and Buddhist). Using an historical and phenomenological approach, she surveys Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Japanese literature in order to demonstrate the exchange of religious elements between the Hindu and Buddhist depictions of Gaṇeśa throughout Asia. Getty refers to 'Brahminical' and 'Buddhist Tantrism'; perhaps it would be clearer to call 'Brahminical Tantrism' simply Hindu Tantrism. Although there are similarities between Vedic and Tantric beliefs and practices, Hindu Tantrism is a stream in its own right, although not necessarily Brahminical. See Chapter Four for a discussion on Tantrism. Alice Getty, *Gaṇeśa: A Monograph on the Elephant-Faced God* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971), p. 1.

[31] Paul B. Courtright, *Ganesa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (New York: Ox-ford University Press, 1985), pp. 11-12, 95-97.

[32] See Chapter Four. Suvira Jaiswal, "The Demon And The Deity: Conflict Syndrome in the Hayagrīva Legend," in *Vaiṣṇavism in Indian Arts and Culture*, ed. Ratan Parimoo (New Delhi: Books & Books Publishers, 1987), pp. 40-57.

development of beliefs and practices in the 'mainstream' pan-Indian texts? What are the various elements from local traditions that have been incorporated into the 'mainstream' pan-Indian literature?

These questions, and others that follow in this discussion on methodological problems, need to be prefaced by a warning. No single study, especially one that is focussed on the development of a single deity, can aim to answer all of the questions or definitively any of them. But these are nonetheless important questions, and the hope would be that several studies in combination can move forward towards the finding of at least tentative answers.

2.2.2. *Limitations of the Focus on Mainstream Sanskrit Tradition*

Work on the historical development of deities for the most part has centred on the pan-Indian 'mainstream' texts (Vedas, Epics, Purāṇas). Although Clothey and Getty do not consider the variants of the Murukan and Gaṇeśa myths in an analytical manner, Courtright does so in respect of Gaṇeśa myths. Courtright's study of the various mythic themes on Gaṇeśa is informative in that it provides an understanding of the many mythic variants and contradictions. It is limited, however, in that it views the myths in a vacuum. Because Courtright's objective in the use of the structural approach is not the tracing of the historical development of Gaṇeśa,[33] he is consequently free to remove the variant Gaṇeśa myths from their texts and contexts; in the process, he overlooks the historical and theological context of the myths. However, in tracing the development of Hayagrīva and its culmination in the Śrīvaiṣṇava *Hayagrīva Stotra*, it will become obvious that one cannot afford to ignore the historical and theological context of the Hayagrīva myths.

Finally, in a textual survey based on his 'modified' structural approach to the variant Bali myths, Clifford Hospital demonstrates how the myths about Bali as demon are transformed to the point where Bali becomes revered as the perfect devotee. According to Hospital, it is important to

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[33] Based on a combination of the structural approach and psychoanalytical interpretation, Courtright provides an analysis of the variant myths of Gaṇeśa. He outlines five levels of the Gaṇeśa myths (the first four are taken from O'Flaherty): (1) narrative—the various stories; (2) metaphorical—the meaning implied in the mythic events, i.e., the beheading of Gaṇeśa as initiation into Śiva's circle; (3) metaphysical—the goal of liberation from the cycle of rebirth; (4) socio-psychological—the various relations Gaṇeśa has with his family; and (5) etiological—explanation of how certain phenomena came into being, i.e., Gaṇeśa's elephant head. The last one is an addition by Courtright. Courtright, *Ganesa*, pp. 11-12.

view each myth in terms of its modifications, rather than be limited to a single interpretation based on all the variant myths.[34] Hospital's approach for studying the myths of a specific deity/demon is useful for the study of the Hayagrīva myth. However, I believe it is necessary to view the variant myths in the context of the theological world-views of their particular texts, which Hospital does not do.

Although work on the historical development of deities for the most part has centred on the pan-Indian 'mainstream' texts (Vedas, Epics, Purāṇas), it is quite conceivable that other influences have also played a role in the development of deities. It seems important therefore in investigating the Hayagrīva figure to analytically examine religious streams other than the traditional Epic and Purāṇic texts. Clothey is the one scholar who is concerned with the historical development of a deity (Murukaṉ) from the perspective of mythology, iconography, ritual, and theology;[35] however, he does not analyse the depictions of the deity synchronically in relation to other religious streams, an aspect which is crucial in the tracing of the religious history of Hayagrīva.

Apart from giving a preliminary sketch of the Hayagrīva deity in India, R.H. van Gulik, in his *Hayagrīva: The Mantrayānic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan*, primarily provides a textual survey of the Buddhist references to Hayagrīva in Tibet, China and Japan in the light of the status of horse-cults prior to the introduction of Buddhism in each of these countries. Van Gulik found that, in the regions in which a dominant horse-

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[34] Hospital critiques O'Flaherty for speaking in vague terms, making grand generaliza- tions concerning the 'Hindu' tradition, and for ignoring contexts and time periods. According to Hospital, it is important to view each myth in terms of its modifications, rather than be limited to a single interpretation based on all the variant myths. Consequently, his 'modified structural approach' makes a distinction between phase (time) and milieu (place). Regarding the myths about Bali, he detects five phases in the development of three different myths. In what Hospital calls Myth-A (phase one)—the mythic strand contained in the Epics and early Purāṇas—Bali is portrayed as a demonic being who threatens *dharma* but is overcome by Viṣṇu's *avatāra* Vāmana. In Myth-B (phase two) contained in the middle Purāṇic period, belonging to a new milieu, Bali is portrayed positively as prosperous, devotional, and *dharmic*. In the late Purāṇic period (phase three), Hospital discovers an important modification of Myth-B in which Bali is portrayed as Viṣṇu's devotee (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). Phase four, in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, contains five versions of the myth. Finally, Myth-C (phase five) is contained in the three versions of the Bali myth from modern Kerala, in which Bali is connected with Kerala's Oṇam festival, a development based on a popular Malayalam myth. In the Malayalam *Mahābalicaritam*, we find a brief version of Myth-A set within a much longer story. Clifford Hospital, *The Righteous Demon: A Study of Bali* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), pp. 16, 18-19.

[35] Clothey, *The Many Faces of Murukaṉ*, pp. 8-9.

cult existed before the introduction of Mantrayāna (or Vajrayāna) Buddhism (Tibet, Japan), the local traditions appropriated and syncretized Hayagrīva with local deities with the result that Hayagrīva became prominent. However, in China, where an indigenous horse-cult had receded in importance, Hayagrīva was a figure with very little status or place within the tradition.[36] In his edited volume on *Ganesh: Studies of an Asian God*, Robert L. Brown demonstrates in the introduction (substantiated by the various subsequent articles) how Gaṇeśa has evolved and been transformed in East and Southeast Asia in the absence of the Gaṇeśa Purāṇic myths; that is, he shows how elements outside the mainstream Sanskrit tradition have had a prominent role in the development of Hindu/Buddhist beliefs and rituals. Consequently, Brown concludes that there are two distinct streams in the depiction of Gaṇeśa: (1) the Indian Purāṇic stream, which emphasizes the beheading of Gaṇeśa and restoration with an elephant's head, and (2) the iconographical association of Gaṇeśa with Śiva, which interchanges with the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara (as in Tantra) in East and Southeast Asia.[37] Lastly, in tracing the ancient forms of Śiva, Hans Bakker asserts that one cannot disregard either the visual or the written material, given the paucity of sources. He notes, however, that it is important to maintain perspective on their differences (i.e., textual and archaeological descriptions may have originated in different strata of society).[38]

This notion of the influential role of iconography is important in tracing the development of Hayagrīva. Here, one needs particularly to investigate the Āgamic tradition, because its depictions of Hayagrīva differ somewhat from those of the Epic and Purāṇic streams. In the case of Hayagrīva, particularly important are the Āgamic texts which are prescriptive in respect of the practical and ritual aspects of the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta traditions (esoteric and/or temple based). The Āgamas—a part of the Sanskrit religious literary tradition—are a useful source in conjunction with the Purāṇic myths, as they can shed light on the dynamic relations between the mythic and ritual traditions.

No doubt, the three-fold division of religious texts proposed above—that is, (1) pan-Indian 'mainstream', (2) pan-Indian sectarian, and (3) regional

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[36] R.H. van Gulik, *Hayagrīva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1935).

[37] Robert L. Brown, *Ganesh: Studies of an Asian God* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

[38] Hans Bakker, "Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Forms of Śiva Worship", in *Les Sources et Le Temps*, edited by F. Grimal (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2001); pp. 397-412, 405-406.

sectarian—is a reasonably accurate conceptualization of the different streams of Hindu literature. However, the fluidity of the interaction and mutual influence among the various streams can make it difficult to determine the precise relationship among the various Hindu traditions. Such interaction raises important questions regarding the Hindu tradition at large. For example: What is the interaction between mainstream and pan-Indian sectarian traditions? More specifically, there are other important questions that I believe emerge in this complex study of the development of a deity in the light of mythology, iconography and ritual in which there is an overlap of similar material in the different genres of literature: What is the relation between the 'encyclopedic' Purāṇas,[39] which contain portions of Āgamic material, and the Āgamic corpus itself? Does Hindu iconographical material originate from a common source?

Furthermore, a study of the various sectarian Tantric (Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta) traditions may also illuminate the overall development of deities. A consideration of the influence of inter-sectarian dynamics on the transformation of any given deity may shed light on the interrelations or convergence among the many traditions. Such a perspective may raise important questions for exploration regarding the Hindu tradition at large. For example: Is the sharing of certain common religious beliefs, symbols and motifs among the diverse traditions the result of mutual borrowing and/or the consequence of traditions having common origins?

3. Multi-Dimensional Analysis: Diachronic and Synchronic Approaches

Given the shortcomings of the existing literature in the light of the diversity of traditions in India and the complexity of the historical process pertaining to their development, it is evident that a multi-dimensional approach is required to attain a more adequate understanding of myth within the Hindu traditions and, by extension, of the development of a deity. Such an approach would involve an analysis along two key dimensions: (1) a *diachronic* dimension, where one examines the development and transformation of a myth or deity through the broadly defined religio-historical periods; and (2) a *synchronic* dimension, where at a given cross-section of time one analyses the relations among the various versions of a

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[39] For information on 'encyclopedic' Purāṇas, see 'Purāṇic References' in Chapter Three.

myth or deity existing among the several religious sects (Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta). These two dimensions would demand attention to the following aspects: (1) the mythology about the deity (Epics and Purāṇas), (2) the iconographical and mantraic references to the deity (Āgamas), and (3) the ritual and devotional hymns to the deity (pan-Indian sectarian and regional texts). In other words, the analysis of a myth or deity requires an examination of the historical development of theological shifts (*diachronic*) and of the relations among various religious sects within one or more of the time periods (*synchronic*) corresponding to the three-fold division of Indian texts: (1) pan-Indian 'mainstream', (2) pan-Indian sectarian, and (3) regional sectarian.

4. AIMS OF THE STUDY

Although this study looks specifically at the complex development and changing role of the Hayagrīva deity, it aims at the same time to delineate the larger process of religious change in Hinduism. Towards that end, I provide, firstly, an overview and analysis of the major references to, and texts about, Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian Hindu literature. The analysis both of the antecedents to, and the development of, the Hayagrīva myth as well as of the iconography and ritual function of the horse-headed god should enlighten us on the multi-faceted transformation of the deity, especially as it occurs in Vaiṣṇavism. This analysis clearly demonstrates that one can only speak of the various 'histories' of Hayagrīva. There is no single history of the god.

Secondly, I attempt to reconstruct the *religious history* of the deity Hayagrīva as he appears in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Śrīvaiṣṇavism itself draws from various streams (the Vedic corpus, the classical Epics and Purāṇas, the the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, and the Āḻvārs). All are seen to have contributed to the regional evolution of Śrīvaiṣṇava devotion to Hayagrīva. Here, it is necessary to emphasize that this part of the investigation is not merely an historical overview of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Rather, it is an analytical study of the various religious streams that have contributed to the important depiction of Hayagrīva in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* in a regional context. More significantly, in analysing the history of the deity in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, the study sheds light on the shift away from the agglomeration characteristic of an oral tradition and culture towards the systematization of a religious tradition which involves a *high degree of selectivity* in the acceptance of beliefs and myths concerning Hayagrīva.

Thus, the chief aims of this study are: (1) to offer an analysis of the various references to Hayagrīva in the *pan-Indian* 'mainstream' texts and their implications for the study of Hindu myth, (2) to come to an understanding of the development of the deity in the *regional tradition* of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, using Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* and the establishment of a Hayagrīva Temple in Tiruvahīndrapuram, Tamil Nadu, as focal points and, importantly, (3) to provide an overall evaluation of the general place of Hayagrīva in the contemporary Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition.

4.1. *Note on Translation*

Original translations of the primary compositions in praise of Hayagrīva used by the Śrīvaiṣṇavas that are cited in this study have been provided by me. Included among them are: Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* and three Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional hymns that pertain to Śrīvaiṣṇava and Āgamic initiation and daily rituals.[40] Beyond these texts, this study also includes my translations of the five short sectarian ritual compositions which have their roots in the Āgamic tradition.[41] I quote from these translations extensively in the study. None of these nine primary compositions except one had so far been translated from Sanskrit to the English language. The non-technical language of the genre of *stotra* and other ritual/devotional hymns can be problematic. In order to avoid awkward constructions, in some places I have provided a loose translation, not always following the literal pattern of the Sanskrit grammar. I have been particularly concerned with capturing the meaning of the verses in English. Moreover, I have been attentive to the specific phraseology and imagery of the Āgamic and Śrīvaiṣṇava traditions. I have broken up the verses into small units in order to facilitate readability.

In addition to the nine primary compositions, I have also translated the pan-Indian references to Hayagrīva or portions of passages on Hayagrīva in texts that either have not been translated or have been poorly translated from Sanskrit into English. These references are taken from: (1) Epics and

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[40] *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti*, *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti*, and *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana*.
[41] *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*, *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Śat Nāma Arcanā*, *Hayagrīva Kavaca*, *Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat*, and the *Hayagrīva Pañjara*.

Purāṇas, and (2) Āgamas.[42] Likewise, I have provided original translations of the references to Hayagrīva in regional sectarian works, including the hymns of the Āḻvārs (*Periya Tirumoḻi* and *Tiruvāymoḻi*), and Vedānta Deśika's philosophical treatise *Śata Dūṣaṇī*.

4.2. *Summary of Chapters*

The study consists of nine chapters, divided into four parts. Part One consists of the present chapter, Chapter One, in which I have reviewed the relevant scholarly literature and discussed the methodological issues in tracing the development of a deity, presented the broad approach necessary in the study of such development, set out the aims of the study, and listed the works for which I have provided original translations.

Part Two (Chapters Two, Three and Four) is concerned with the *complexity* of motifs and myths concerning Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian tradition. In Chapter Two, I look at the origins of Hayagrīva, including an examination of the Brāhmaṇic (*śruti*) antecedents of the Hayagrīva figure in order to answer questions such as: What is the argument of the origin of the Hayagrīva figure with respect to the beheading motif? What is the argument put forth regarding the origin of Hayagrīva as non-Vedic? In an effort to answer these questions, Chapter Two lays out some basic information, which may seem elementary but is nonetheless fundamental to the in-depth analysis in the remainder of the study. Chapter Three summarizes the references to Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian Epic and Purāṇic (*smṛti*) texts in order to answer the following questions: What is the nature of the development of the Hayagrīva myth with respect to the god-demon conflict and the loss and recovery of the Vedas? What might be the reason for the different portrayals of Hayagrīva in the various Purāṇas? Can Purāṇic myths be studied meaningfully without regard to text or context? Why or why not? In the analysis, I refer to the *kaleidoscopic perspective* as a means to comprehending the diversity in the depictions of Hayagrīva. Chapter Four is concerned with the Āgamic references to Hayagrīva and includes an analysis of the importance and significance of the iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva. I attempt to answer such

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[42] (1) *Mahābhārata* (critical edition), *Harivaṃśa*, *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa*, *Kālikā Purāṇa*; and (2) *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*, *Īśvara Saṃhitā*, *Padma Saṃhitā*, *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā*, *Sātvata Saṃhitā*, *Śeṣa Saṃhitā*, *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā*, *Śāradātilaka Tantra*, *Yoginī Tantra*, *Meru Tantra*.

questions as: From the viewpoint of theology and temple architecture, what is the status of Hayagrīva? Are the Āgamic depictions of the deity consistent? What important features and emblems form a part of the iconographical portrayals of Hayagrīva? How do the Āgamic and 'classical' Purāṇic iconographical references compare? To what extent are they continuous with other iconographical prescriptions of Viṣṇu and other Indian deities or depictions of Hayagrīva in other sectarian traditions?

The focus of Part Three of this study, consisting of Chapters Five to Eight, is on the *selectivity* involved in the acceptance of motifs and myths of Hayagrīva in the more systematic religious tradition of South India. It derives its justification, firstly, from the fact that Hayagrīva, who is a minor deity at the pan-Indian level, is worshipped as the Supreme God in the South Arcot region of Tamil Nadu. Secondly, the worship of Hayagrīva is part of a lived tradition there even today. In Part III as a whole, I attempt to reconstruct the Śrīvaiṣṇava history of this deity, using Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* as the focus (based on the fact that it provided the foundation for the Vaṭakalai popularization of the worship of Hayagrīva in Tamil Nadu). Chapter Five provides an overview of Śrīvaiṣṇavism and an analysis of the references to Hayagrīva contained in the Vaiṣṇava Tamil literature prior to Vedānta Deśika, and is concerned with the following questions: Was Hayagrīva a prominent figure in the Tamil land prior to Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*? How do the Āḻvār depictions of Hayagrīva compare with the mainstream Epic/Purāṇic ones? What was the status of Hayagrīva in Tamil Nadu prior to Vedānta Deśika? How does the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of God shed light on the development of Hayagrīva as the full form of the Supreme in South India?

Chapter Six contains an overview of the life and religious thought of Vedānta Deśika, and a thorough analysis of Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva in his *stotra*. This includes a discussion of the following questions: What is the theological status and role of the deity? Which form(s) of god is Vedānta Deśika addressing? What is the historical and theological significance of Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* portrayal of Hayagrīva? Furthermore, the chapter consists of an analysis of the development of Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning. Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva is related back to the pan-Indian *śruti* and *smṛti* texts and to the pan-Indian Vaiṣṇava Āgamas. As a result of my analysis, I provide a salient perspective—the *reverse-prismatic perspective*—for the conceptualization of the contribution of the various religious streams to the development of Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva: the myths of the Epics and Purāṇas, Pāñcarātra theological

tenets, iconographical depictions and ritual practices, as well as the emotionalism of the Āḻvārs. The chapter specifically attempts to answer the following questions: What are the continuities and discontinuities between the *Hayagrīva Stotra* and Epic/Purāṇic understanding of the role and nature of Hayagrīva? What are the similarities and differences between *Hayagrīva Stotra* and the Āgamas in their understanding of the theological, ritual, and iconographical status of the god? What does the *Hayagrīva Stotra* reveal concerning the various streams that are integrated into the Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view?

In Chapter Seven, I examine the status and role of Hayagrīva in Tamil Nadu after Vedānta Deśika's time, with a particular focus on the popularization of the worship of Hayagrīva among the Vaṭakalais. This chapter includes an analysis of the references to Hayagrīva in the sectarian Tamil temple literature, my own observations concerning the status of Hayagrīva at the famous Devanātha and Hayagrīva Temples at Tiruvahīndrapuram, and an overview of the religious practices at these temples. Furthermore, I provide an analysis of three devotional hymns to Hayagrīva. This discussion should advance our understanding of the presence of Hayagrīva in the Tamil milieu and answer the following questions: What was the consequence of Deśika's devotion to Hayagrīva? How do the later Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns differ from Deśika's *stotra*? What is the significance of the Vaṭakalai popularization of Hayagrīva? Why is Hayagrīva not a more prominent figure generally in the temples of Tamil Nadu?

Chapter Eight is concerned with the interaction between pan-Indian and regional religiosity. There are five late ritual texts about Hayagrīva which reflect the employment of pan-Indian religio-literary genres. The chapter also notes how the celebration of Hayagrīva as the Supreme God at the Śrīvaiṣṇava regional level is, in turn, linked back to the pan-Indian Agamic level. In the process, there thus occurs the legitimization of Hayagrīva as the Supreme God at the pan-Indian level. I survey the five short ritual texts used in praise of, or for meditation on, Hayagrīva in the Agamic tradition, and seek to answer such questions as: What is the nature and role of Hayagrīva in these hymns? Does it differ from the portrayal of Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian mainstream and Śrīvaiṣṇava sectarian texts? Is there a relation between the regional and pan-Indian worship of Hayagrīva?

Following these substantive chapters, Part Four, consisting of Chapter Nine, provides the main conclusions of the study regarding the development of Hayagrīva.

In tracing the origins and antecedents of the Hayagrīva deity, the Vedic literature is important as it demonstrates possible antecedents to the later Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva figure found in the pan-Indian textual tradition; accordingly, I examine it in the following chapter.

PART TWO

COMPLEXITY IN THE MOTIFS AND PATTERNS
OF A HINDU DEITY:
HAYAGRĪVA'S STATUS IN THE PAN-INDIAN TRADITION

CHAPTER TWO

ANTECEDENTS OF THE HORSE-HEADED FIGURE:
THE *ŚRUTI* TEXTS OR THE INDIGENOUS TRIBES OF ASSAM?

Tracing the origin of any Hindu deity is a complex process. Particular
problems arise in relation to Hayagrīva who, while recognized as a pan-
Indian deity, is most visible in the South from the 14th-15th century
onwards. In the secondary literature, the tracing of the origins of the
Hayagrīva deity has been dominated by two perspectives, with one
focussing on (1) Brāhmaṇic antecedents, and the other on (2) non-Vedic
traditions. Although the horse-headed figure known as Hayagrīva is absent
from the Vedic corpus, according to some scholars (Rennow, O'Flaherty,
Courtright) there are antecedents to the deity contained in the *Śatapatha
Brāhmaṇa* myth which relates the beheading sacrifice of Viṣṇu and the
placement of the horse's head on the Vedic sage Dadhyañc. By way of
contrast, other scholars (Getty, Jaiswal) make the claim that Gaṇeśa and
Hayagrīva have been integrated into the Hindu texts and pantheon from
non-Vedic traditions. Jaiswal's specific study on the origins of Hayagrīva
claims that he originated among the hill tribes of Assam. These two
perspectives serve as the organizing framework for this chapter.

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of the various
references in the pan-Indian *śruti* texts that some scholars have regarded as
constituting the antecedents to the horse-headed figure, especially the myth
of the beheading sacrifice contained in the *Brāhmaṇa*. The second part
offers an analysis of these references. The third part looks at Jaiswal's
alternative thesis regarding Hayagrīva's origin.

1. Overview of the References to Hayagrīva in the *Śruti* Texts

1.1. *References in the* ṚgVeda

The religion of the Vedic period (1500-500 B.C.E.) has been termed
Brahmanism. The authoritative collection of Vedic literature (includes the
four Vedas [*ṚgVeda*, *Sāma*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva*], the Brāhmaṇas, the
Āraṇyakas, and the Upaniṣads) known as *śruti* (that which is heard),
originally passed on solely in oral form regards the performance of
sacrifice (*yajña*) as foundational. The Vedas contain a variety of creation

myths, including (1) *sat* arising out of *asat* (*Ṛg Veda* 10.72.3), (2) golden embryo (*hiraṇya-garbha*) set on the waters (*Ṛg Veda* 10.121; 10.82), (3) the creative power of *tapas* (*Ṛg Veda* 10.129; 10.190), (4) the cosmic pillar (*Atharva Veda* 10.7) and, most important for the study of the god-demon conflict in the late Vedic period, (5) the sacrifice of the primeval Man (*Puruṣa Sūkta*, *Ṛg Veda* 10.90).

In the pantheon of the *Ṛg Veda* (ca. 1500 B.C.E.), Viṣṇu is a deity of minor importance. There are various references to Viṣṇu in which he is said to represent the moon, the sun, and *soma*; he is the slayer of the demon Vṛta, as well as the god who takes three strides to measure the universe. Although the Vedic depictions of Viṣṇu's role are somewhat ambiguous and vague, Deborah A. Soifer has effectively demonstrated a basic consistency in the nature of Viṣṇu: (1) benevolence towards humankind, (2) alliance with Indra, who defeats the demon Vṛtra, (3) the act of taking three strides, (4) pervasiveness, and (5) the ability to take on different forms.[1] The Vedas contain antecedents to the doctrine of *avatāra*, the animal or human forms that the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu takes on earth in order to restore and/or maintain the cosmic order at specific times and places. Moreover, Soifer notes a continuity in characteristics between the Vedic Viṣṇu and the later *avatāric* forms of Viṣṇu found in the Epic and Purāṇic literature. Most important is Viṣṇu's quality of benevolent action for the welfare of humanity and his connection with Indra in: (1) demon-slaying activity, (2) cosmogonic activity, and (3) ability to have more than one form.[2]

Concerning antecedents to the horse-headed figure (*haya-grīva*), it is an early Indian belief that the sun-god (Viṣṇu) both assumes the form of a horse and is associated with fecundity.[3] For example, *Ṛg Veda* 1.163 equates the horse with the sun. One possible antecedent to the horse-headed figure thus may be the Vedas themselves; that is, although Viṣṇu is not a major deity in the Vedic corpus, he is nonetheless associated with the sun and the horse.

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[1] Deborah A. Soifer, *The Myths of Narasiṃha and Vāmana: Two Avatars in Cosmological Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 15-17; Jan Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism: A Comparison* (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), pp. 3-4.

[2] Soifer, *The Myths of Narasiṃha and Vāmana*, p. 24.

[3] Jan Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht: N.V.A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij, 1954), pp. 147, 172; van Gulik, *Hayagrīva*, p. 9.

1.2. *References in the* Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, *and* Āraṇyakas

A horse-headed being is portrayed in several mainstream *smṛti* texts as both a god and a demon. It is consequently important to note that by the later Vedic Period (900-500 B.C.E.), the *Brāhmaṇa* myths are predominantly about conflicts between gods (*devas*) and demons (*asuras*). Ananda K. Coomaraswamy demonstrates the unpolarized nature of the relation between Vedic gods and demons; it is therefore necessary to distinguish *devas* from the Western sense of God because: (1) *devas* and *asuras* both arise from Prajāpati, the primeval, cosmic *puruṣa* ('man') and therefore have the same ontological status; (2) both are blinded by their pride; and (3) *asuras* were originally considered to be a class of gods which only later came to be depicted as negative beings. This close relationship between the two groups becomes clearer in the *bhakti* texts (wherein both gods and demons are secondary to the Supreme God).[4]

According to A.L. Basham, *asura* is a term used in the *ṚgVeda* for lesser gods, which only later became a name for a class of demons.[5] By way of contrast, Walsh Edward Hale argues that there is not enough evidence to claim that there is a specific group of gods called *asuras*. Rather, the term *asura* is used in the *ṚgVeda* for any god who functions as a leader (a status attained by the support of his followers). Hale also demonstrates that there is no being called an *asura* who, depicted as god in the early *ṚgVeda*, is then portrayed as demon in the later Brāhmaṇa texts. He claims that the change that occurs in the Vedic literature is in the usage of the word *asura*, rather than in the nature of the beings to whom the term is applied.[6]

In his study of the demon Bali, Clifford Hospital, too, discusses the relation between gods and demons. He states that even though the *ṚgVeda* describes the conflict between Indra and the demon Vṛtra, this conflict motif continues in the *Brāhmaṇas* in the context of the *deva-asura* conflict over sacrificial ritual.[7] Although the gods and demons share the same ontological status, there is conflict between the two in their quest for power, which is to be attained through the proper performance of the

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[4] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Angels and Titans, an Essay on Vedic Ontology", *JAOS* 55, no. 5 (1935), pp. 373-419; Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 59; Hospital, *The Righteous Demon*, p. 2.

[5] A.L. Basham, *That Wonder that was India* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1954), p. 236.

[6] Wash Edward Hale, *Asura*, *in Early Vedic Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 37, 52-67, 179.

[7] Hospital, *The Righteous Demon*, pp. 29-32.

sacrificial ritual. Through performing the rituals or chanting the mantras, the gods are able to ward off the demons. The gods win if they perform the rituals correctly. Consequently, Vedic sacrifice (*yajña*)—which is regarded as the universal principle of life—becomes established as the central ritual. Sacrifice is believed to have an intrinsic power over the gods. Food offerings are made to the deities to please them and to receive some material reward in return. The sacrifice of animals, usually a goat (a horse for special occasions), is also made as an offering to the gods for the accumulation of merit in this world (*puṇya*), which leads to heaven (*svarga*). The intonation of the Vedic verses is considered as having the power to invoke the gods.

Gradually, the correct and perfect chanting of the Vedic verses came to be established as the most important aspect of the sacrifice. Consequently, the gods lost their major role in the ritual. Because recitation is reflective of the re-creation of the world/cosmos, its sounds are thought to have cosmological significance. This is the foundation of the concept of mantra. By the time of the late Vedic period, there was an increase in the importance of Vedic ritual in order to attain spiritual power. Vedic rituals, performed only by the priestly class (*brahmin varṇa*), resulted in the *brahmin* monopoly of Vedic education. The contents of the *Brāhmaṇas* show an increase in the importance of public ritual. One of the more important sacrifices (performed for kings) is the *aśva-yajña* (horse sacrifice).

Although Viṣṇu is only a minor deity in the *ṚgVeda*, in the later *Brāhmaṇas* He is equated with Prajāpati—a 'supreme' deity who is the god of creation—continuous with his early Vedic cosmogonic role of taking three strides and pervading the three worlds. In the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā,* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* there are antecedents to the theriomorphous appearances of Viṣṇu.[8] These are the fish (*matsya*), the boar (*varāha*), and the tortoise (*kūrma*). Interestingly, in the *Mahābhārata*, these animals become the 'primary' *avatāric* forms of Viṣṇu.

As in the *ṚgVeda*, Viṣṇu is associated with both the sun and fecundity in the Brāhmaṇas.[9] For instance, in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.3.1.29, Viṣṇu

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[8] *Taittirīya Saṃhitā, with Commentary of Madhava* (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1960). For Viṣṇu as a fish, see *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.8.1.1. For Viṣṇu as a boar, see *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 5.4.3.19; *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 7.1.5. For Viṣṇu as a tortoise, see *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 7.5.1ff. There are also antecedents to the myth about Vāmana (dwarf) in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 2.1.3.

[9] Gonda, *Aspects Of Early Viṣṇuism*, pp. 147-148; van Gulik, *Hayagrīva*, p. 9.

is equated with Dadhikrā (or Dadhikrāvan), a celestial horse described as a form of the sun.[10] Viṣṇu is also linked with sacrifice, the central theme of the Brāhmaṇa literature. In *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.3.1, Viṣṇu is referred to as *Yajña* (a personification of 'sacrifice'). Similarly, Viṣṇu is associated with sacrifice (*yajña*) in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 3.4.1.14; 5.2.3.6; 12.4.1.4.

Regarding antecedents to the horse-headed figure (*haya-grīva*), not only is Viṣṇu linked with the celestial horse Dadhikrā, but the later figure of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva (and the etiology of the horse- head) is linked, by some scholars (Ronnow, O'Flaherty, Courtright), to the *pravargya* legend in the *Brāhmaṇas*.[11] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1.1-17 contains a myth about Viṣṇu having his head cut off while he is performing ritual sacrifice with other deities (Agni, Indra, Soma, Makha and Viśvadeva).[12] The myth tells of an occasion when termites gnawed at Viṣṇu's bowstring. When Viṣṇu's bow split, his head was also cut off. The gods, however, began worshiping the headless god during the ritual sacrifice. In the text's subsequent passage, Indra warns Dadhyañc, a Vedic sage, that he will lose his head if he reveals the secret doctrine of the headless sacrifice (as Indra would be threatened by the recovery of Viṣṇu). The *aśvins* (horsemen), however, convince Dadhyañc to reveal the secret (*madhu-vidyā*, literally 'honey-wisdom'). Upon being told about Indra's threat, they remove Dadhyañc's head and hide it, while temporarily replacing it with the head of a horse. And, finally, when Indra, as he had threatened, cuts off Dadhyañc's head, the clever *aśvins* replace it with Dadhyañc's 'real head'.[13]

Similar to the first portion of the *pravargya* story found in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (14.1.1.1-17), there are several other references in the Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Āraṇyakas to a personified Yajña (sacrifice) having had

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[10] Dadhikrā is the symbol of celestial light in Ṛg Veda 1.163.2 and 7.77.3. Dadhikrā is the most popular Vedic horse, known for its strength, swiftness and triumphs.

[11] *Pravargya*—'introductory ceremony to the Soma sacrifice at which fresh milk is poured into a heated vessel called *gharma* or into boiling purified butter'— is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *pra+vṛj* 'to place in or on fire/heat; to stew'. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Marwah Publishers, 1986), p. 693.

A man, while studying the special sections of ritual, offers the *pravargya* oblation when he is going to receive the *rahasyam* 'secret doctrine' of Vedic ritual. Jan Gonda, *Vedic Ritual: The Non-Solemn Rites* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1980), p. 360. O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*, pp. 218-219; Courtright, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 95-97.

[12] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (translation. by Julius Eggeling), vol. 44, pp. 441-442.

[13] This is continuous with the Vedic reference to the *aśvins*: "O Aśvins, your win is that Dadhyañc proclaimed to you the *madhu* with the horse's head" (*Ṛg Veda* 1.116.12).

his head cut off during the performance of a sacrifice. However, these passages do not mention the headless Vedic sage Dadhyañc. In *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 7.5.6, the Vedic deity Makha's head is cut off by his own bow which had been gnawed apart by ants. Similar myths are also present in *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 4-9.1; 5.3.18; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.2-5.1; and *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 5.1.1-5.[14]

1.3. *Upaniṣads*

The Classical Upaniṣads, which comprise the fourth and final body of the Vedic corpus, are often regarded as speculative and philosophical in nature. Indeed, the philosophical equation between the underlying reality that is Brahman and the individual self that is *ātman* has been pivotal in later Hindu theological and philosophical developments. However, while the Upaniṣads reveal the essence of the cosmos and the belief, *yajña* and the earlier ritual-oriented Vedic texts are insufficient for gaining knowledge (*jñāna*) necessary for the attainment of *mokṣa* (liberation from the cycle of rebirths), they nevertheless also contain passages concerned with ritual action and the achievement of materialistic goals.[15] During this period, one nevertheless does find the spiritualization of the concept of sacrifice; that is, one sacrifices desires and practices self-mortification for the accumulation of *tapas* (heat, spiritual power) as the means to the awareness of the true nature of reality and ultimately *mokṣa*.

Consequent to the emerging metaphysical inquiry, the *asuras* (demons) are more explicitly viewed negatively as they are seen to be more of an actual threat to the individual quest for knowledge and accumulation of *tapas*. This is evident in the description of *asuras* as arising from the 'bad air' of the anus (as opposed to the *devas* arising from the breath).[16] Furthermore, the Upaniṣads differentiate the *asura* Virocana, who is

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[14] *Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa* (translation by Dr. W. Caland) (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, Baptist Mission Press, 1931). *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, with Commentary of Sāyaṇa* (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1872). *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, with Commentary of Sāyaṇa* (edited by Rajendralala Mitra) (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1859).

[15] Patrick Oliville, *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 16-27.

[16] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3 and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 1.2., in *Upaniṣat-Saṃgrahaḥ*, edited by J.L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984); *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads* (translation by Robert Ernest Hume) (2nd. ed., reprinted; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

satisfied with a superficial answer to the true nature of Reality, from the *deva* Prajāpati, who is on the correct path in the quest for an understanding of the true nature of *ātman*.[17] Although there are no references to the horse-headed figure to be found in the Upaniṣadic texts surveyed, we do see therein a shift in the understanding of the god-demon relationship.

2. ANALYSIS OF ANTECEDENTS IN THE *ŚRUTI* TEXTS: PROBLEMS IN TRACING THE ORIGIN OF HAYAGRĪVA

That the tracing of the origin of any Hindu deity is a challenge is evident in the studies by Clothey, Getty, Courtright, Brown, and Hospital, which have been discussed in the previous chapter. Clothey traces a god who is known to be a Southern god (Murukaṉ) and it would seem that understanding the evolution of this deity is a little simpler than when dealing with a pan-Indian god who may or may not have had its origins in the Dravidian milieu. When the god is a major one whose origins are known, the process is somewhat more straightforward than when one is dealing with the history of a deity like Hayagrīva who, although most popular in the South since the late medieval period (ca. 14th C.E. century onwards), is evident much earlier as a relatively minor pan-Indian deity. Even in the case of a popular deity like Gaṇeśa, Courtright notes that tracing the origin of Gaṇeśa can be nothing more than speculative. However, he offers a hypothesis of his own: Gaṇeśa emerged during the textual transition from sacrificial ritual to temple worship. With the development of temple worship there grew a need for the maintenance of the purity of the sacred space of the temple—precisely the role attributed to the Gaṇeśa deity.[18]

Most scholars of Hindu mythology (including Biardeau, O'Flaherty) have limited their studies to the Vedic, Epic, and Purāṇic literature. Their analysis of Hindu myths is founded on certain assumptions, a critical one being that which pertains to the Vedic antecedents of Purāṇic literature. However, disparate viewpoints exist regarding the precise relationship between the Purāṇas and the Vedas. Max Müller sees a link between the two. According to him, Vedic worship and Purāṇic worship are different; that is, "the outer form of worship is Vedic and exclusively so; but the eye

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[17] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.7-12. See also Hospital, *The Righteous Demon*, pp. 37-40.
[18] Courtright, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 11-12.

of religious adoration is turned upon quite different regions."[19] On the other hand, Madeleine Biardeau and Charles Malamoud find unity in the symbolic structure of the Epics and Purāṇas, as well as antecedents for this in the Vedas and Upaniṣads. Primarily, they conclude that the Vedic sacrifice and the Upaniṣadic concept of renunciation were incorporated, by the priestly class, into the *smṛti* literature (Epics and Purāṇas) in the form of mythical stories.[20] By way of further contrast, Rocher holds that the linking of the Vedas with the Purāṇas leads to the conclusions that: (1) the Purāṇas developed as a reinforcement of Vedic teachings; (2) the Purāṇas are a necessary companion of the Vedas; and, lastly, (3) the Purāṇas rank as the 'fifth Veda'.[21]

In tracing the myth of a specific deity, scholars have tended to look for Vedic antecedents to pan-Indian deities. O'Flaherty takes the position that there is a link in the symbolic structure of the Vedas and the Purāṇas. In her analysis of the mythic transformation of Hayagrīva, in both *Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* and *Women Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*, O'Flaherty claims Brāhmaṇic antecedents to the Hayagrīva myth. Going further, she links— as does Courtright— the figure of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva to the story of the sacrifice of Dadhyañc contained in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (as described in an earlier section 'References in the *Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Āraṇyakas*').[22] The myth of a deity having his head cut off can be traced as far back as the Brāhmaṇas, in which Viṣṇu, an unimportant god in the Vedas, is associated with this beheading sacrifice. Although the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* myth does describe the beheading of Viṣṇu, it is significant that it does not directly link the horse-headed deity with Viṣṇu, the topic of the next section.

2.1. *Hayagrīva and the Beheading Motif*

As aforementioned, in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* there are antecedents to the theriomorphous appearances of Viṣṇu: the fish

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[19] F.M. Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, So Far as it Illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmans* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968 [1859]), pp. 54-55.

[20] Madeleine Biardeau et Charles Malamoud, *Le Sacrifice dans L'Inde Ancienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), pp. 10-13.

[21] Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 15-17.

[22] O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts,* pp. 218-219; Courtright, *Ganesa*, pp. 95-97.

(*matsya*), the boar (*varāha*), and the tortoise (*kūrma*).[23] It has been suggested by Gonda that the early references to both *kūrma* and *varāha* may well reflect the process of incorporation of old tribal totems into the Sanskrit mythic tradition, with the totems evolving into gods and eventually becoming the incarnations (*avatāra*) of God Visnu.[24] There are also animal-headed human forms like *nṛ-siṃha*/Narasiṃha (man-lion) or *haya-grīva* (horse-headed man) contained in the *Mahābhārata*. What is the significance or relevance of gods whose bodies are human whereas their heads are those of an animal?

An important aspect of Vedic ritual is animal sacrifice (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.2.1.1-2). *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.2.1.15-18 describes five 'animals' that are sacrificed: horse, bull, ram, goat, and *puruṣa* or man. According to some scholars (see below), the mythic stories about the beheading of a human, as seen in the Dadhyañc myth of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1.1-23, also belong to Vedic ritual. Although beheading occurs, the headless body is given another head, that of an animal. The new 'real' head is considered to be the container of the secret teaching, the location of seed or *soma*, and the place of speech.[25] The head as containing wisdom is continuous with the *Puruṣa Sūkta* of *ṚgVeda* 10.90, in which *brahmins* are said to have emerged from the mouth of the Primordial Man (*puruṣa*). The mouth, as the place of speech, represents the wisdom of the Vedas and the knowledge of the rituals. According to J.C. Heesterman, in the *ṚgVeda* the head represents the head of the universe and the head of the cow/bull represents the invisible place that is the locus of the secret treasure. Although the severing of the head is an important part of the ritual, it is by no means the final step. The restoration of the head is necessary in order to complete the sacrifice.[26]

As is evident, the beheading motif is manifest in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1-17. One possible antecedent to the origin of Hayagrīva may be that text, as it associates Visnu with the beheading sacrifice. O'Flaherty identifies the sacrifice of Visnu and the placement of the horse's head on the sage Dadhyañc as the Vedic antecedent to the Hayagrīva myth, based on the fact that the horse-head contains the 'secret' or wisdom.[27] She

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[23] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.8.1.1, 5.4.3.19, 7.5.1ff; *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 7.1.5.

[24] Gonda, *Early Aspects of Viṣṇuism*, p. 124.

[25] J.C. Heesterman, *The Broken World of Sacrifice: An Essay in Ancient Indian Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), pp. 71-75; Courtright, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 95-97; O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*, p. 219.

[26] Heesterman, *The Broken World of Sacrifice*, p. 72.

[27] O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts,* pp. 218-219.

maintains that Hayagrīva is a suitable *avatāric* form for the role of rescuing
the Vedas, as his image is similar to that of Dadhyañc and the Vedic
sacrifice. In the Vedas, the horse-headed figure Dadhyañc is associated
with the recovery of the lost sacrifice. Assuming this link in her analysis of
Hindu myths, O'Flaherty, in accepting the continuity between Vedic myths
and the Epics and Purāṇas, however, neglects other possible religious
streams as a source. The head as the container of wisdom and the 'place of
speech' is, of course, continuous with the later roles attributed to
Hayagrīva. However, it is important to note that the references in the
Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Āraṇyakas to the beheading sacrifice, other than
that contained in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, do not mention Dadhyañc. In
fact, J.A.B. van Buitenen refutes the thesis that there is any connection at
all between the sacrifice of Viṣṇu's head, the horse's head placed on
Dadhyañc, and Hayagrīva.

Based on the fact that the *madhu* (honey/secret) of the horse-head is
different from the *soma* of the *pravargya*, van Buitenen concludes that the
Dadhyañc myth is not related to the *pravargya* ceremony—the "introduc-
tory ritual to the Soma sacrifice at which fresh milk is poured into a heated
vessel called *gharma* or into boiling purified butter"[28]—and that it is mere
speculation to associate the Dadhyañc myth with Hayagrīva. He writes: "It
is hard to accept that the intermittently visible complex of a horse-headed
hero or demon is completely accounted for by a person who promulgates
the 'honey' to the *aśvins*." van Buitenen claims that there is no trace of
human sacrifice in the Dadhyañc story. Further, he finds that the horse-
headed figure (Dadhyañc), who reveals the *madhu* to the *aśvins*, is instead
"connected with the *gharma* (heated vessel) of the *ṚgVeda* in which Atri,
who introduced the elaborate *pravargya* ritual into the *agniṣṭoma*
(sacrificial fire) as a new 'head', is lost among the secrets of the forest from
which it emerged." van Buitenen refutes Kenneth Ronnow's interpretation
of *makhasya śiraḥ* (head of *makha*)[29] in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as human
sacrifice, because van Buitenen regards it as misleading to associate human
sacrifice as part of the *pravargya* ceremony. For the *pravargya* ceremony,
the head of *makha* refers to the pot/vessel (*iṣṭi/ukhā*), the container used in
the sacrifice (but not a human head). He states that *makha* is also a Vedic
term for 'ritual celebration' (as opposed to sacrifice). Because *agniṣṭoma*
consists of only three parts (whereas Vedic religious sacrifice consists of

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[28] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 693.
[29] *Makhasya śiraḥ* can also be translated as 'head of festivals' and 'beginning of the rite'.

four parts), the sacrifice is regarded as incomplete. Consequently, the *agniṣṭoma* sacrifice of the three parts is completed by the restoration of the head of the Primordial Man (*puruṣa*). The *agniṣṭoma*, the incomplete or 'headless sacrifice' of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, is completed by the essential fourth part.[30] According to van Buitenen, there is no evidence that the *madhu* (honey) of the horse-head in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* myth is related to the *pravargya* ceremony.

In contrast to van Buitenen, Courtright's analysis of Gaṇeśa relates the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* myth of the beheading sacrifice to the most common and recurrent motif in the myths of Gaṇeśa, the origin of his elephant head. According to Courtright, the birth of the deity includes both the beheading and restoration of the original head with the 'real' elephant head. Although Gaṇeśa's first head is cut off by Śiva, it has to be replaced so that he may possess his 'real' head. Dismemberment is the violent and necessary act for the creation of the Gaṇeśa form; that is, the sacrifice of Gaṇeśa's initial head is the means to initiate a demon into the divine realm.[31] Although Courtright applies this interpretation only to Gaṇeśa, it could conceivably also be applied to Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva, that is, Gaṇeśa and Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva are both beheaded and restored with a different or 'real' head. Gaṇeśa's ambivalent character and his initiation into the Sanskrit pantheon suggest a demonic past. Getty argues that the beheading of Gaṇeśa reflects an historical process in which he was, although originally regarded as an outsider (i.e., indigenous) and hence a threatening figure, later rehabilitated by his beheading and adoption into Śiva's inner circle.[32]

As in the case of Gaṇeśa, several important Purāṇic texts contain ambivalent depictions of Hayagrīva.[33] Hayagrīva's malevolence may be an expression of his demonic past, and thus his need to be 'rehabilitated' so that he may be included in the Hindu pantheon. However, unlike the many variants of the Gaṇeśa myths in which the beheading and restoration motif of Gaṇeśa's head is prominent and significant, the beheading motif is not central in the later Epic/Purāṇic myths about Hayagrīva.[34] In fact, there are only two references to the beheading motif in all of the Purāṇas surveyed—both of which are in very late Purāṇic texts and neither of which are regarded as Vaiṣṇava.

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[30] J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Pravargya: An Ancient Indian Iconic Ritual, Described and Annotated* (Poona: Deccan College, 1968), pp. 16-20, 22.

[31] Courtright, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 62-74.

[32] Getty, *Gaṇeśa*, p. 1; Courtright, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 11-12.

[33] See Chapter Three.

[34] See 'Epic References' and 'Purāṇic References' in Chapter Three.

The story of the beheading sacrifice found in Vedic literature reappears only in the mythic variants of the later sectarian Puranas, *Skanda Purāṇa* (Śaiva) and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (Śākta), as an explanation for the origin of Hayagrīva: the beheading of Viṣṇu and the replacement of his head with the sacrificial horse-head. I believe it to be significant that the mythic strand of the beheading sacrifice found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is maintained only in non-Vaiṣṇava texts. This may reflect the position that Hayagrīva was originally not Vaiṣṇava, or that there are different strands to the explanation of the origin of the horse-headed figure (evident in the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṃśa* passages discussed in the next chapter). Furthermore, the two myths that do contain an explanation for the origin of the horse's head *make no mention* of the important Vaiṣṇava *avatāric* myth of Hayagrīva recovering the Vedas from the two demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha!

It must be emphasized that none of the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas surveyed incorporate any stories regarding the origins of the Hayagrīva's horse-head. Why would Vaiṣṇavas not include this strand of the explanation of the origin of Hayagrīva, especially given the fact that they so regularly attempt to legitimize their sectarian tradition by linking it with the Vedas? One could, I suppose, argue that Hayagrīva's origin is simply taken for granted. But I find it significant that not even a single Vaiṣṇava text that I surveyed (Purāṇic or Āgamic) includes the myth of the beheading sacrifice; that is, there are no 'origin' stories for Hayagrīva. Furthermore, for Vaiṣṇavas (unlike for Śaivas), Hayagrīva is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu who came to earth to restore the *dharma* at a certain time and place, and thus by nature is 'wholly' benevolent.[35] Viṣṇu's *avatāras*, wholly benevolent, require no explanation as to how they obtained their animal heads. In this, the Vaiṣṇava myths on Hayagrīva and Nṛsiṃha are consistent. The contemporary notion (O'Flaherty, Courtright) that sacrifice was a means to initiate a once 'demon' into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon as an *avatāra* is not present. It is precisely for that reason that one needs to speak of the '*histories*' of the deity rather than a single history. Although the various forms of Viṣṇu are by their very nature benevolent without a demonic past, the many forms of Śiva are commonly depicted as ambivalent, and even gruesome. Thus, the motif of the beheading sacrifice may be acceptable in

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[35] For an explanation as to why the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, although a Vaiṣṇava text, contains two different myths, one about a malevolent horse-headed figure and one about a benevolent one, see section 'Overview of the Synchronic Development of the Myths about Hayagrīva' in Chapter Three.

the Śaiva 'histories' of the ambivalent gods, but it is not acceptable in the Vaiṣṇava stories of the various incarnations of Viṣṇu.

One case of a Vaiṣṇava 'history' of a deity in which a demon is incorporated into the Vaiṣṇava circle is that of Bali. It is crucial to note, however, that Bali does not appear as a full form incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Although Bali exists as a demon in the Epic and early Purāṇic literature, he is depicted as benevolent in the later Purāṇic texts (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). Here, the important concepts of sacrifice and initiation are reflected in Bali's self-sacrifice and single-minded devotion to Viṣṇu. In the case of Bali, the motif of beheading of the demon Bali is unneccesary (and not present!) as he is transformed by his single-minded devotion to the Supreme God Viṣṇu in the later Purāṇic literature. Bali attains his divine status only in the later Vaiṣṇava Bhakti texts like the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where he serves as the model of a perfect devotee who sacrifices his desires to the will of Viṣṇu.[36]

3. HAYAGRĪVA'S POSSIBLE NON-VEDIC ORIGIN(S)

Although many scholars who have investigated Indian deities have limited themselves to a textual study of the pan-Indian 'mainstream' literature, others have gone outside the Sanskrit texts to make other claims as to the origins of certain deities. We have already seen how Getty and Courtright argue that one cannot know for sure whether Gaṇeśa is an original deity or a derivative. However, Getty does posit that Gaṇeśa was possibly a totem in Dravidian culture, and suggests that the beheading and restoration motif of Gaṇeśa may be understood as the initiation of Gaṇeśa into Śiva's circle, with the motif possibly reflecting the historical process by which local or regional elements were incorporated into the Sanskrit tradition.[37] Likewise, in her article "The Demon and the Deity: Conflict Syndrome in the Hayagrīva Legend", Suvira Jaiswal attempts to reconstruct the history of Hayagrīva on the basis of mythology in combination with her observations of a shrine of the deity in Assam, and claims that Hayagrīva was originally a tribal god.

The complexity of the development of the Hayagrīva myth is hinted at by Jaiswal, who explains the textual inconsistencies in the various depictions of Hayagrīva in the following manner. Observing that Hayagrīva

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[36] Hospital, *The Righteous Demon*, pp. 20-24, 154ff.
[37] Hospital, *The Righteous Demon*, pp. 20-24, 154ff.

is worshipped by the tribals in the hills of Assam, especially on Maṇikūṭa Hill (near the village of Hajo), Jaiswal holds that this deity is the direct antecedent of the Epic and Purāṇic gods. She argues that the figure is based on an original demonic god of fever, and must have originated in an interaction of beliefs and traditions among the indigenous tribes in Assam.[38] According to her, the figure of Hayagrīva must have been incorporated into Mantrayāna Buddhism (ca. 7th-8th century C.E.). She suggests that after the appropriation of the Hayagrīva deity by the *brahminical* tradition, involving its subsequent brahminization, Hayagrīva was incorporated into the pan-Indian texts.

Jaiswal believes that Hayagrīva is an import from an animalistic cult in interaction with Mantrayāna Buddhism, which was then absorbed by 'Greater' Hinduism (via Buddhism). Her argument that the Hayagrīva figure was a phenomenon appropriated by Mantrayāna Buddhism from the tribes in Assam is, however, speculative; indeed, she provides little empirical evidence for her theory. Much of her argument concerning Hayagrīva in the Assam hills is based on the references to Hayagrīva in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*. In this text, Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva is described as having killed the demon of fever (*jvarāsura*) and taken his abode in the Maṇikūṭa hills, where His temple still exists.[39] Jaiswal does not take into consideration the fact that the *Kālikā Purāṇa* is a Śākta Purāṇa believed to have been compiled as late as ca. 1350 C.E.;[40] this seriously weakens her argument, for it is considerably later than the references to Hayagrīva in the *Mahābhārata* and the earlier Purāṇas. She further establishes her argument on the basis of a reference to Hayagrīva in the *Yoginī Tantra* (ca. 16th century C.E.), an even later text![41] Although her citation of *Yoginī Tantra* is meant to bolster her argument, in truth the late date of the text undermines her view. I do not, therefore, find Jaiswal's interpretation to be a convincing one. Even though Jaiswal has not persuasively established a

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[38] Jaiswal, "The Demon and the Deity", pp. 40-57. Interestingly, there are several references to Hayagrīva's head as being placed in the northeastern part of the ocean (*Mahābhārata* 12.335.1-64; *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.13.1-10). Assam is in the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent. Likewise, the Āgamas contain many iconographical references prescribing that the Hayagrīva image be placed in the northeastern side of the temple's main shrine (see Chapter Four).

[39] Chapter 83 in *Kālikā Purāṇa* describes Viṣṇu killing the demonic form of Hayagrīva.

[40] For details regarding the reference to Hayagrīva in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, see 'Śākta Purāṇas' in Chapter Three.

[41] For details regarding the reference to Hayagrīva in the *Yoginī Tantra*, see 'Śākta Āgamas' in Chapter Four.

case for the non-Vedic origins of Hayagrīva, this possibility cannot altogether be ruled out.

One cannot simply assume that the Vedic corpus is necessarily the only or earliest antecedent to religious developments solely because they are the earliest religious compositions in the pan-Indian 'mainstream' Sanskrit oral tradition. The origin of a deity may be the result of an exchange of elements between Vedic and other religious traditions. The mainstream Sanskritic tradition has necessarily to be viewed in relation to regional traditions. However, I do not believe that the two are completely distinguishable; indeed, there has been a long-standing interaction between the pan-Indian Sanskrit and regional traditions. It is plausible therefore that many elements from outside the pan-Indian mainstream have been influential in the development of Hinduism; specifically, religious practices and beliefs of people outside the Vedic tradition were perhaps integrated into the evolving Sanskritic tradition via the Āgamic stream, and only later written down in the form of the Āgamas (ca. 500 C.E.).[42] It is obvious that Āgamic materials have been incorporated into the 'encyclopedic' Purāṇas.[43] This also raises sharply the issue of origins, in view of the complexity of India evident in the multiple racial/ethnic groups and in the several families of languages and their regional variations. For, it is also plausible that there has been more than a single origin of the horse-headed figure.

4. CONCLUSION

The tracing of the origins of the Hayagrīva deity is, as is obvious, a formidable challenge. There are two dominant scholarly perspectives on the origins of the Hayagrīva figure which focus, respectively, on: (1) Brāhmaṇic antecedents, and (2) the indigenous tribes of Assam. The

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[42] Based on his study of Śrīvaiṣṇava Āgamic ritual, Venkatachari demonstrates that many Āgamic practices have originated in the indigenous (Dravidian) tradition. His argument is based on linguistics; that is, Venkatachari traces the etymology of several Āgamic terms and shows how they are in fact derived from the Tamil (Dravidian) language. K.K.A. Venkatachari, "The Śrī Vaiṣṇava Āgamas" (unpublished paper). Based on his study on Tantric Saiva cults, Sanderson looks at the influence and relation of Saiva metaphysics on the performance of rituals by priests who performed them. Alexis Sanderson, "The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika" in L'Image Divine: Culte et Meditation dans l'Hindouisme, edited by André Padoux (Paris: Edition du CNRS, 1990), pp. 31-88.

[43] For further details, see 'Depictions of Hayagrīva in the Āgamas and Purāṇas' in Chapter Four.

Brāhmaṇas contain stories about the beheading sacrifice of Viṣṇu and
Yajña (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1-17; *Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* 7.5.6),
which some regard as an antecedent to the later Purāṇic stories explaining
the origins of a horse-headed being. Even if antecedents to the Hayagrīva
figure can be theoretically traced back to the Brāhmaṇic literature, such as
the references to the Vedic horse sacrifice (*aśva-yajña*) and the beheading
of Viṣṇu, they could conceivably be interpreted either as (1) a means of
incorporating local deities into the mainstream tradition, or (2) only one
origin among several of the horse-headed figure. Similar to Courtright's
view regarding the origins of Gaṇeśa, I, too, think that any attempt to make
a definitive discernment of Hayagrīva's origins (given the complexity of
India's geographical and racial/ethnic make-up) can be no more than
speculative. There may have been one or several origins of the horse-
headed figure. Regardless of his origins, however, later developments show
that one can only speak of the various 'histories' of Hayagrīva (whether it
be several trajectories from a single origin or several independent origins).
In order to see clearly the development of Hayagrīva figures, myths, and
rituals, including his various 'histories', especially his evolution as an
avatāra in Vaiṣṇavism, it is necessary to analyze the depictions of
Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian 'mainstream' *smṛti* texts (Epics and Purāṇas),
which form the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

MYTHIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE PAN-INDIAN TRADITION:
HAYAGRĪVA IN THE *SMṚTI* TEXTS

The conceptions of, and stories about, Indian deities have evolved in a
variety of contexts, which have influenced their various characterizations.
Such is also the case with Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian 'mainstream' *smṛti*
texts (the Epics and Purāṇas) in which the references to, and myths about,
him are varied and disparate. The horse-headed figure is described in some
texts as benevolent, in others as malevolent, in some as benevolent and
malevolent (in separate references), and in others as both benevolent and
malevolent (in a single reference). The changes and contradictions in the
myths about Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian Epic and Purāṇic texts clearly
demonstrate that a deity does not exist in a single milieu. Because the
different versions of the myths reflect major changes that the deity has
undergone in several religious contexts, one has necessarily to speak in the
plural regarding the '*histories*' of Hayagrīva.[1]

   The mythic account of the deity's benevolent act of recovering the
Vedas from the demons (*Mahābhārata* and certain Purāṇas) is the
beginning of Hayagrīva's Vaiṣṇava history as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.
Meanwhile, the Epic and Purāṇic myths of Hayagrīva also provide the
scope for the development of the god as rescuer and protector. That is, the
myths associate him, firstly, with the Vedas which he rescues, and,
secondly, with the role of a protector because he kills the two demons
Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

   The first part of this chapter provides a survey of the various references
to, and myths about, Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian *smṛti* texts. The second
part offers an analysis of them, which includes an examination of the
diachronic and *synchronic* dimensions of the images of the horse-headed
figure. In doing so, the chapter sheds light on Hayagrīva's place in the
development of the Vaiṣṇava tradition of *avatāras*—as the benevolent deity
who recovers the Vedas. Prior to the discussion of the two substantive parts
of the chapter, there is a brief introduction to an analogy from the world of

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[1] The '*histories*' of Hayagrīva may or may not be the result of radically different origins
of the deity. It is plausible that they may represent different trajectories from a single origin.

optics as a tool to a better comprehension of the diversity and complexity
of the images of the deity.

1. THE KALEIDOSCOPIC PERSPECTIVE:
THE ABUNDANCE OF IMAGES OF HAYAGRĪVA

The kaleidoscope is 'an optical toy for producing multiple symmetrical
patterns by multiple reflections in inclined mirrors enclosed in a tube.
Loose pieces of coloured glass, paper, etc., are placed in the tube between
the mirrors and as this is turned, changing patterns are formed.'[2] In a
kaleidoscope, the constituent elements remain the same, but every time the
kaleidoscope is turned, it provides a different pattern, highlighting some
elements more than others (some pieces actually fall to the bottom and are
hidden). The analogy of the kaleidoscope has been usefully employed by
Diana Eck to advance our understanding of Hinduism, given the variety
and complexity of beliefs, images, and rituals within it.[3] The same analogy
has been creatively used by K.K.A. Venkatachari in his study of the
development of the worship of Sudarśana (the personification of Visnu's
cakra (discus).[4] The analogy is also useful in understanding the
development of the images of Hayagrīva in which many of the same
constituent elements have been used in the religious literature to offer a
multiplicity of images.

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[2] *Collins English Dictionary*, p. 832.

[3] Diana Eck uses the analogy of the kaleidoscope in passing in her discussion on the va-
riety and complexity of the Hindu pantheon. See Eck, *Darśan*, p. 26. The analogy can also
be made use of in comprehending the emergence of the six Hindu orthodox philosophical
schools; that is, the analogy makes vivid how the same essential elements in Hinduism (such
as *saṃsāra* [cycle of rebirth], *mokṣa* [liberation], *brahman* [Ultimate Reality], and *ātman*
[soul]) are employed, but give rise to different patterns.

[4] K.K.A. Venkatachari, "Personification at the Intersection of Religion and Art: A Case
Study of Sudarsana Cakra", in *Vaiṣṇavism in Indian Arts and Culture*, edited by Ratan
Parimoo (New Delhi: Books & Books Publishers, 1987), p. 271.

2. Overview of the References to Hayagrīva in the Pan-Indian Texts

2.1. *References in the Epic* Mahābhārata

In Classical Hinduism (ca. 200 B.C.E.-500 C.E.) one sees a unique attempt to reconcile the ritual-based Vedic religion with Upaniṣadic metaphysical beliefs. The result is a pluralistic tradition, in which there are three different paths leading to salvation (*jñāna* [knowledge], *karma* [action], and Bhakti [devotion]) as promulgated in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, contained in the *Mahābhārata* (ca. 200 C.E.-400 C.E.). By the time of the Epics, as reflected in the *Mahābhārata*, Viṣṇu had evolved into a deity of greater importance; he is revered as Supreme. The *smṛti* literature frequently describes Lord Viṣṇu not only as Supreme, but also as appearing on earth in animal and human *avatāric* forms.[5] One of the earliest references to the concept of *avatāra* is in *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.6, in which the charioteer reveals himself as Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu who has come to earth to restore *dharma* and to teach it to the warrior Arjuna. As Paul Hacker observed in his study of the developments in religious terminology, it was from Viṣṇu's descent ('coming down') as Kṛṣṇa that the concept of *avatāra* was born, and was then extended to other of Viṣṇu's manifestations, such as the man-lion (*nṛ-siṃha*).[6] Although the concept of *avatāra* is not of great significance within the Śaiva tradition, it has become an increasingly important concept within Vaiṣṇavism.

During the Epic period, the concept of *avatāra* was still fluid; that is, there were multiple attempts to systematize the various incarnations of Viṣṇu in the *Mahābhārata* through lists. The *Mahābhārata* contains what are probably the two earliest listings of Viṣṇu's various *avatāras*. The first list, that of *Mahābhārata* 12.337.36,[7] consists of only four *avatāras*: (1) boar (*varāha*), (2) man-lion (*nṛ-siṃha*), (3) dwarf (*vāmana*), and (4) human

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[5] An important concept in theistic Hinduism is that of *avatāra*. The term *avatāra* is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *ava* + *tṛ* 'to descend, enter into, to get over'. The term *avatāra* means 'descent, manifestation, or incarnation' and refers to the animal or human forms that the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu takes on earth. The belief is that Viṣṇu appears on earth as an *avatāra* in order to restore and/or maintain the cosmic order at specific times and places.

[6] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 23-24. See, Paul Hacker, "Zur Entwicklung der Avatara-lehre", *Weiner Zeitscrift für die Kunde Sud-und Osatasiens,* vol. 4 (Vienna: 1960), pp.47-70.

[7] *Mahābhārata* (edited by V.S. Sukthankar et al.) (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933-1960).

(*manuṣa*). The second list, that of *Mahābhārata* 12.326.77-78, contains an additional three *avatāras*, which may be a further development of the general category of human (*manuṣa*) *avatāras*: (5) Rāma of Bhārgava, (6) Rāma, son of Daśaratha, and (7) Kṛṣṇa. Other independent references to various incarnations are also found throughout the *Mahābhārata*.[8]

Kalpana Desai notes that *avatāras* became popular beginning with the *Mahābhārata*. She also observes that the twenty-four standing forms of Viṣṇu that are acknowledged in the Āgamic texts are mentioned in the list of *The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu* in the *Mahābhārata*, *Anuśāsanika Parvan* 149.[9] Although Hayagrīva is not included in this list of twenty-four forms, Viṣṇu is described in the *Mahābhārata* as having the form also of a horse-headed being.

2.1.1. *Epithets for the Horse-headed Figure*

A number of epithets and stories in the *Mahābhārata* refer to horse-headed beings; a few explicitly refer to Viṣṇu's association with a horse's head. Similar to the earlier *ṚgVedic* references, the *Mahābhārata* describes the sun assuming the form of a horse (12.262.41).[10] Oddly enough, in *Mahābhārata* 1.23.16, Garuḍa (King of the birds)[11] is referred to as *haya-mukha* (one who has the face of a horse). Like the god Hayagrīva, Garuḍa is also depicted in a much later text as a symbol of the Vedas.[12] However, unlike Hayagrīva who is revered as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, Garuḍa is later recognized as Viṣṇu's vehicle.[13]

Furthermore, there are several names/epithets of a horse-headed being in the *Mahābhārata*, including: *haya-śiras* (horse-headed one), in *Mahābhārata* 5.94.7; 1.59.23; 1.61.10; 12.326.56; 12.327.79-87; *aśva-śiras* (horse-headed one), in *Mahābhārata* 3.315.14; 12.126.3; 12.335; *haya-*

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[8] For example, (1) fish (*matsya*) 3.185; (2) tortoise (*kūrma*) 1.16.10-11; (3) boar (*varāha*) 12.202; (4) man-lion (*nṛ-siṃha*) 3.270; (5) dwarf (*vāmana*) 3; (6) Paraśurāma 3.115; (7) Rāma 12.326.77 (more developed in the other Epic—*Rāmāyaṇa*); (8) Kṛṣṇa 2.188,270; (10) Kalkin 3.139, and so forth.

[9] Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu*, pp. 3-10.

[10] Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 148.

[11] Garuḍa is the son of Kaśyapa and Vinatā. According to Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty), the Garuḍa bird is an ancient symbolic form of Agni who carries the seed like the Indo-European fire-bird carries the ambrosia. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 105.

[12] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* III.21.34 depicts Garuḍa's wings as singing the Vedic hymns.

[13] *Agni Purāṇa* 12.32-33; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.59 and 8.3.32.

grīva (horse-necked one), in *Mahābhārata* 5.128.50; and, finally, *vāji-grīva* (horse-necked one), in *Mahābhārata* 12.25.31. These various epithets describing a horse-headed being may well refer to different figures. There are variant depictions in the *Mahābhārata* of the role and nature of the horse-headed figure, which will be discussed in the next three sections. Hayagrīva is depicted in a couple of passages as a king (*Mahābhārata* 5.72.15; 12.25.22-31); in several passages as a horse-headed demon (*Mahābhārata* 1.59.23; 1.61.10; 5.128.50); and in other passages he is described as a form of Viṣṇu (*Mahābhārata* 3.315.14; 3.193.16; 12.126.3; 12.326.56; 12.335.1-64). Interestingly, the etiology of the horse's head is not discussed in early texts such as the *Mahābhārata*.

2.1.2. *Horse-headed King*

Firstly, and least importantly, there is a horse-headed figure called *haya-grīva* depicted in the *Mahābhārata* as a king. *Mahābhārata* 12.25.22-31 refers to *haya-grīva* as a good king who performs many sacrifices and fights heroically in many battles (even after he loses his followers). By way of contrast, *Mahābhārata* 5.72.15 describes a horse-faced figure called *haya-grīva* as the evil king of Videha,[14] who is killed by his subjects. These depictions of a horse-headed king are relevant in so far as they reflect a split between good and evil, which parallels the conflict between the Supreme God and the demons.

2.1.3. *Horse-headed Demon*

In *Mahābhārata* 1.59.23 and 1.61.10, there is mention of a horse-headed demon (*haya-śiras*) in the lists of demons (*asuras*). According to *Mahābhārata* 1.65.24, a horse-headed demon was born to the sage Kaśyapa and Danu. In *Mahābhārata* 5.128.49-50, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described as having killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. This passage is continuous with the myth about Viṣṇu's *avatāra* slaying the demons in order to recover the Vedas (see below). Furthermore, the passage states that Śrī Kṛṣṇa during another lifetime also killed a horse-headed demon:

> When sleeping on the vast ocean, he slew Madhu and Kaiṭabha, and in another birth he also killed a horse-headed one [haya-grīva].[15]

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[14] Videha is the country where Janaka—Sītā's father—is said to have been king. The capital of Videha is Mithilā.
[15] The motif of reclining on the Milk Ocean is associated with Nārāyaṇa.

Although this is a very simple passage, lacking in explicit details, it is very significant for at least two reasons: firstly, the horse-headed demon is called *haya-grīva* , which is the conventional name for Viṣṇu's horse-headed *avatāric* form in the later Purāṇic literature. Secondly, although there are several passages which refer to a horse-headed demon (*haya-śiras*) as an enemy of the gods, this depiction in the *Mahābhārata* of a horse-headed figure as an explicit enemy of Kṛṣṇa is unique.

2.1.4. *Hayagrīva as Supreme God: Myth of Recovering the Vedas*

More importantly for the purposes of this study, the *Mahābhārata* contains references that identify Hayagrīva as a form of Viṣṇu. Firstly, *Mahābhārata* 12.327.79ff describes the four *vyūhas* (cosmic emanations of Viṣṇu): from Vasūdeva emanates Saṃkarṣaṇa, from Saṃkarṣaṇa emanates Pradyumna, and from Pradyumna emanates Aniruddha. *Mahābhārata* 12.327.79-87 describes the horse-headed figure (*haya-śiras*) as having sprung from Aniruddha. Later on, the Pāñcarātra Āgamas provide complex categorizations of the various forms of Viṣṇu, including this *Mahābhārata* notion that Hayagrīva emanates from Aniruddha (*Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*),[16] an emanation from a *vyūha*, an idea found also in Purāṇic and Āgamic literature.

Meanwhile, *Mahābhārata* 12.326.56 identifies the horse-headed figure as one of Viṣṇu's forms. Viṣṇu reveals himself as *haya-śiras* to the sage Nārada and states that he is, in fact, the horse-headed one:

> I am the horse-headed one (*haya-śiras*), who in the northwestern ocean, receives good oblations to the gods (*havya*) and offerings to the manes (*kavya*) with devotion.

This passage reflects Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva's association with sacrifice (*yajña*). Furthermore, *Mahābhārata* 12.126.3 describes the 'horse-headed one' (*aśva-śiras*) as living in the region called Badari—the abode of Nara and Nārāyaṇa—where he reads the eternal Vedas. This passage associates Hayagrīva with the Vedas by depicting him simply as reading the Vedas.

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[16] F. Otto Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* (Madras: Adyar Library, 1916), pp. 47-48; S.K. Ramachandra Rao, *Āgama-kosha Vol. IV Pāñcarātrāgama* (Bangalore: Kalpatharu Research Academy, 1991), pp. 123-125. By way of contrast, there are also references in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas that describe Hayagrīva as an emanation of Saṃkarṣaṇa. For the Pāñcarātra Āgamic descriptions of the various forms of Viṣṇu and depictions of Hayagrīva, see Chapter Four.

In *Mahābhārata* 3.315.14 (not the critical edition),[17] Viṣṇu himself is referred to as *aśva-śiras* (the horse-headed one), a form he takes for destroying the *daityas* (demons); however, the reference does not specifically identify the demons as Madhu or Kaiṭabha. By way of contrast, in *Mahābhārata* 3.193.16-194.30, the horse-headed form of Viṣṇu is referred to as one who with his discus slays the demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha who, while they were being created, had stolen the Vedas from Brahmā.

Mahābhārata 5.97.4 mentions a horse-headed One (*haya-śiras*) who brings the Vedas to the world:

> On every auspicious occasion *haya-śiras* rises from the nether regions and fills the world with Vedic hymns.

This passage associates Hayagrīva with the Vedas, which he recovered from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha—the central myth of the benevolent Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva. Finally, *Mahābhārata* 12.335.1-64 is a detailed account of Viṣṇu who, as the horse-headed One, recovered the Vedas, which the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha had stolen from Brahmā and taken to a hell beneath the ocean. Two drops of water were cast by Nārāyaṇa into the lotus arising from his navel. One of the drops looked like honey and from it sprang the demon Madhu, who is composed of *tamas*. The other drop was hard and from it sprang Kaiṭabha, who is composed of *rajas*.[18] The two demons, one of *tamas* and the other of *rajas*, seized the Vedas from Brahmā and took them to the bottom of the ocean. Brahmā informed Viṣṇu (Nārāyaṇa) as to what had occurred, and Viṣṇu woke up from his sleep, took the form of Hayagrīva (*haya-śiras*) and recovered the Vedas from the nether regions. Viṣṇu returned the Vedas to Brahmā and established the horse-headed form in the northeastern region of the great ocean. After returning the Vedas to Brahmā, Viṣṇu put the horse's head into the ocean and resumed his original form. Madhu and Kaiṭabha (*tamas* and *rajas*) had been confronted by Hayagrīva (*sattva*), and *sattvic* qualities triumphed in the confrontation.

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[17] Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 148.

[18] The technical term *guṇa* (quality) means the constituent of the material world and is three-fold: (1) *sattva* (purity, white, truth); (2) *rajas* (passion, activity, agitation); and (3) *tamas* (darkness, lethargy).

2.2. *The* Harivaṃśa: *Horse-headed Enemy of Viṣṇu*

Although it is believed to have been composed as early as ca. 200-400
C.E.,[19] the *Harivaṃśa* was later appended to the *Mahābhārata*, and is often
called an 'Appendix' to that Epic. The *Harivaṃśa*—a text in which Kṛṣṇa
is recognized as the Supreme God—describes His various life-episodes
(including the great deeds he performed as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu), an aspect
of Kṛṣṇa that is only alluded to in the *Bhagavad Gītā* of the *Mahābhārata*.
Although the *Harivaṃśa* is an appendix to the Epic *Mahābhārata*, it is, at
the same time, quite similar in genre to the Purāṇas. Much has been written
regarding the close relationship between the *Harivaṃśa* and the Purāṇas.
Stories from the *Harivaṃśa* are retold in Purāṇas such as the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*
and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[20] The *Harivaṃśa* passages about Kṛṣṇa and the
gopīs (cowherdesses) are believed to be some of the earliest depictions of
that motif. The critical edition of the text (containing around 6,000 *ślokas*)
allows for the identification of later interpolations, including the increase
in erotic elements which, according to Friedhelm Hardy, belong to a
southern recension.[21]

Among the various episodes in the life of Kṛṣṇa described in the
Harivaṃśa are his triumphant battles against the demons. There are a few
references to *haya-grīva* as a horse-headed demon, which are similar to
several passages in the *Mahābhārata*. However, in the *Harivaṃśa* the
horse-headed demon is directly in conflict with Kṛṣṇa (unlike in the Epic).

2.2.1. *Horse-headed Demon*

In *Harivaṃśa* 31.70, a horse-headed demon (*haya-grīva*) is listed among
the demons who accompany Bali to fight Viṣṇu in his incarnate form as
Vāmana (31.68).[22] This passage is interesting as Hayagrīva is listed as one
among many *asuras* like Vipracitti, Śibi, Ayoṣaṅku and Ayośiras, as well
as what appears to be a second horse-headed demon, Aśvaśiras! This may
well reflect the fact that the *haya-grīva* demon is altogether different from
the demon Aśvaśiras.

Harivaṃśa 33.15 mentions a horse-headed demon (*haya-grīva*) who is

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[19] Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, p. 420.
[20] Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 83.
[21] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 65-78.
[22] *Harivaṃśa* (edited by V.S. Sukthankar et al.) (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research
Institute, 1933-1960).

in conflict with the gods: "Then a horse-headed demon (*haya-grīva*) had a war chariot drawn by a thousand horses, crushing the enemies in combat". Following *Harivamśa* 37.6, a horse-headed figure is listed among other demons: "The might of Hayagrīva, along with Maya, Tāra, Varāha, Śveta and Svaralamba also appear [to help the demon Kalānemi]." (Interestingly, there is simultaneously a boar demon [*varāha*] and a boar *avatāra* in the *Mahābhārata*.)

Harivamśa 44.67 depicts two horse-headed demons; one called Hayagrīva and the other an incarnation of him called Keśi (one with a mane) are at different times sent by Kaṃsa to kill Kṛṣṇa: "Hayagrīva, remembered as having the might of a horse, appeared in this life as the vile [demon] Keśi (the younger brother of Kaṃsa)."[23] However, the horse-headed demon (*haya-grīva*) is eventually killed by Kṛṣṇa. In *Harivamśa* 67.47-56, Keśi in the form of a horse (*haya-asyāsya*) is also killed by Kṛṣṇa.

In *Harivamśa* 91.19, a mighty demon Bhauma was accompanied by Hayagrīva, Nisunda, Pañcajana, and Varadatta, with his 1000 sons. Kṛṣṇa destroyed this group of demons (*asuras*) (91.27). A horse-necked demon (*haya-grīva*) is then described, in *Harivamśa* 91.50, as a great and ferocious demon who was killed by Kṛṣṇa. In *Harivamśa* 92.8, the horse-headed demon called Hayagrīva was killed along with Nisunda and Narakāsura by Kṛṣṇa. The surviving demons bestowed all the riches of Narakāsura to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. After Hayagrīva, Naraka and Mura were killed, their wives approached Kṛṣṇa and bowed before him in surrender (*Harivamśa* 92.28).

Harivamśa 105.14 contains a list of the valorous deeds of Kṛṣṇa, including the killing of King Jarāsaṃdha and the granting of freedom to the kings he had imprisoned. It mentions that Kṛṣṇa also "disturbed the ocean and killed a horse-necked demon (*haya-grīva*)." Finally, *Harivamśa* 109.40 provides a list of demons killed by Kṛṣṇa for the benefit of the gods, which includes a horse-headed figure called *haya-grīva* .

The strand of a demonic horse-headed form predominates in the *Harivamśa*—a Kṛṣṇaite text in which Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme God. Significantly, according to the early references (*Mahābhārata* and *Harivamśa*), the horse-headed demon is always killed by Kṛṣṇa (never Viṣṇu!). Furthermore, the horse-headed demon killed by Kṛṣṇa is consistently referred to as *haya-grīva* (*Mahābhārata*, *Harivamśa*). By way

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[23] Kaṃsa, the King of Mathurā, is the maternal uncle of Kṛṣṇa. Kaṃsa was an enemy of Kṛṣṇa and attempted to kill him.

of contrast, in the *Mahābhārata*, the horse-headed god—a form of Viṣṇu—is most frequently called *aśva-śiras* or *haya-śiras* (although the *Harivaṃśa* does not refer to a horse-headed god at all). It appears that there were at least two different strands of a horse-headed figure during the Epic period—the formative years of 'textual' Vaiṣṇavism. This further enhances the notion that there may have been, in fact, several religious cults (Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, Vasūdeva-Kṛṣṇa) that fused together to form the Vaiṣṇava pantheon (including *vyūha* and *vibhava- avatāric* forms of Viṣṇu).[24] This would serve to explain why a mythic strand of the horse-headed demon is contained in a Kṛṣṇaite text; although the *Mahābhārata* takes for granted the link between Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu, its identification of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu with Vasūdeva-Kṛṣṇa appears to be a later development.[25] The *Harivaṃśa* also contains references to other demons whom Kṛṣṇa kills who have a form similar/identical to *avatāric* forms of Viṣṇu, such as Varāha. Furthermore, the mythic references in the early Purāṇas (*Brahmā, Agni*) reinforce the thesis that the horse-headed demon comes from a stream of Kṛṣṇaite literature, for these early Purāṇas describe the horse-headed demon as having been killed by Kṛṣṇa. It is possible that the *Mahābhārata* borrows from both Vedic and regional traditions, resulting in several different horse-headed figures.

2.3. *Purāṇic References*

By the time of medieval Hinduism (ca. 500-1600 C.E.), two major religious streams emerged: (1) Bhakti, a devotional theistic tradition, and (2) Tantra, an esoteric tradition that emphasizes specific meditative practices, using mantras (meditative syllables) and *maṇḍalas* (circular meditative diagrams). In the general Purāṇic mythology, the similar ontological status of the *devas* and *asuras* is even more evident than in the Vedic corpus. The Purāṇas demonstrate the notion that demons are not always considered evil; a significant example is that of the demon Bali who sacrifices himself as a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, and thereby obtains divine status.[26] The more ancient concept of Vedic sacrifice undergoes transformation to mean the giving up of one's desires ultimately to the Supreme God's will. During

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[24] See Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism (Vaiṣṇavism from 200 B.C to A.D. 500)* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981), pp. 60-63.

[25] Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 73.

[26] See Hospital, *The Righteous Demon*.

this period, an extensive amount of Purāṇic literature was composed, in which Viṣṇu is recognized as one of the three main gods, the preserver and sustainer of the universe (the other two gods being Brahmā, the creator, and Śiva, the destroyer). While there is recognition of the three main gods, unlike Viṣṇu and Śiva, Brahmā gradually declines in popularity.[27]

Another development during this period is the crystallization of the concept of *avatāra*; the Purāṇas contain elaborations of the myths of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*. In the later Vaiṣṇava Purāṇic literature, many myths were further expanded upon to demonstrate the supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu (over the gods Brahmā and Śiva), who makes occasional appearances on earth in order to help and protect his devotees. In the Purāṇic texts that focus on Viṣṇu, there is a lack of consistency in the number, order, and types or forms of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*. According to Purāṇic cosmology, the Supreme Lord is believed to have appeared four times during the 'golden age', when all is pure (*kṛta-yuga*); three times during the second age, when the *dharma* (moral and ethical law) begins to deteriorate so that only three-fourths of the world is pure (*treta-yuga*); twice during the third age, when only half of the world is pure (*dvāpara-yuga*); and will appear only once during the 'dark age', when three-fourths of the world is impure, sinful and degenerate (*kali-yuga*).

Generally speaking, Viṣṇu is a wholly benevolent deity of preservation, endowed with the quality of mercy. However greatly His *avatāras* may vary in form, each in its own way demonstrates Viṣṇu's benevolent nature by performing acts of preservation. Only two of the ten *avatāras* are not in conflict with demons: Paraśurāma appeared in order to protect the *dharma* from the threat of *kṣatriyas* (warriors), and Kalkin, the *avatāra* to come, will save the *dharma* from the *mleccas* (barbaric foreigners).

Both Indian and Western scholars often speak of Viṣṇu as having ten major *avatāras*[28] (*daśāvatāra*, ten embodiments of Viṣṇu). This view refers to what is categorized as the 'traditional' list of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*, drawn from the variant lists in the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas: (1) fish (*matsya*), (2) tortoise (*kūrma*), (3) boar (*varāha*), (4) man-lion (*nṛ-siṃha*),

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[27] Paul Hacker, "The Sankhyization of the Emanation Doctrine: Shown in a Critical Analysis of Texts", *Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sud-und Osatasiens* (Vol. 5, Vienna: 1961), pp. 75-112.

[28] For example, Champakalaksmi, *Vaiṣṇava Iconography in the Tamil Country*, pp. 80-161; Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, pp. 124-146; O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths*, p. 175.

(5) dwarf (*vāmana*), (6) Paraśurāma (Rāma with the axe), (7) Rāma, (8) Kṛṣṇa, (9) Buddha,[29] and (10) Kalkin.

In addition to these ten 'major' or traditional incarnations in 'mainstream' Hinduism, there are numerous other *avatāric* forms within the sectarian Vaiṣṇava traditions. Some post-Epic texts mention a larger number, including historical figures such as Kapila. During the period of post-Epic Vaiṣṇava literature, texts such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra Āgamas give a more extensive listing of *avatāras*.[30] As will be noted in this chapter (and the next one), Hayagrīva, the horse-headed god, is found in various Purāṇic and Āgamic lists of Viṣṇu's incarnations.

Both Indian and Western scholars also distinguish between 'major' and 'minor' categories of the various *avatāras*.[31] The distinction reflects the fact that many *avatāras* are not mentioned in the traditional listing of the ten more widely-known *avatāras*. Although the 'traditional' list of ten *avatāras* is of common usage among scholars, there are many more extensive lists of Viṣṇu's *avatāras* in the Purāṇic and Āgamic literature. Significantly, Hayagrīva is included in some of the *avatāric* listings found in the Purāṇas, including *Agni Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

In the attempt to organize the enormous amount of Purāṇic literature, scholars have placed importance upon the classification of the texts into two subcategories: (1) *mahā* (great, high, important) *-purāṇas*, consisting of the 'more' original and authentic texts, and (2) *upa* (together with, under or nearby) *-purāṇas*, consisting of the later and more sectarian texts.[32] The list of the *upa-purāṇas* is inconsistent and often contains more than eighteen (including texts such as the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Kālikā*

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[29] While the goose (*haṃsa*) is referred to in the *Mahābhārata* as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the Buddha replaces the goose-incarnation in the later Purāṇas' *avatāric* lists, such as the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (3.17-18) and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (1.3.24; 2.7.37). Even though the Buddha is not mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, he has been incorporated as the ninth *avatāra* in the 'traditional' list.

[30] See the subsequent section on 'Purāṇic References' for the listings of *avatāras* found in the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*, and Chapter Four for the incarnation listings in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.

[31] For example, Champakalaksmi, *Vaiṣṇava Iconography in the Tamil Country*, p. 162; Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 147.

[32] The most common list of the eighteen *mahā-purāṇas* is: (1) *Brahma*, (2) *Bhaviṣya*, (3) *Brahmāṇḍa*, (4) *Brahmavaivarta*, (5) *Bhāgavata*, (6) *Kūrma*, (7) *Mārkaṇḍeya*, (8) *Agni*, (10) *Vāmana*, (11) *Matsya*, (12) *Varāha*, (13) *Skanda*, (14) *Śiva*, (15) *Viṣṇu*, (16) *Nāradīya*, (17) *Garuḍa*, and (18) *Padma*.

Purāṇa, and the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa*). Following the notion that *mahā-purāṇas* are more original and authentic, many scholars have hitherto considered them as superior.[33]

Rocher, however, rejects the *mahā-* and *upa-purāṇa* classification because of its ambiguity and lack of historical significance. Firstly, the term *mahā-purāṇa* rarely appears in the Purāṇic texts themselves and, in fact, many of the *upa-purāṇas* are as well-known and as much respected as the so-called *mahā-purāṇas*. Secondly, the listings found in Purāṇic texts are not uniform and, at times, certain texts have appeared in both categories, for example, *Kūrma* and *Skanda Purāṇa*.[34]

Other scholars have established different classifications of the Purāṇic literature. For instance, P.V. Kane categorizes the Purāṇas thematically into four groups: (1) encyclopedic (*Agni, Garuḍa, Nārada*); (2) those concerned with *tīrtha* (*Padma, Skanda, Bhaviṣya*); (3) sectarian (*Liṅga, Vāmana, Mārkaṇḍeya*); and, lastly, (4) historical (*Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa*). Rocher also refers to encyclopedic Purāṇas in his thorough study on Purāṇic literature and claims that *Agni Purāṇa, Garuḍa Purāṇa*, and *Matsya Purāṇa* especially belong to the category of encyclopedic. According to him, 'encyclopedic' Purāṇas—unlike the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which is considered the most unified text and is believed to have been compiled by a single author[35]—are those texts that contain a variety of unrelated subjects. Although the texts have been viewed as unreliable (based on the fact that they do not follow the *pañcalakṣaṇa* framework), the encyclopedic Purāṇas are valuable in that they contain fragments of ancient material, some of which appears to have otherwise been lost.[36]

The various sects also have their own classifications of Purāṇas, based often on their own sectarian beliefs. For example, the Vaiṣṇava tradition divides the Purāṇic corpus according to the three *guṇas* (attributes): (1) *sattvic* (white, pure) texts, including *Viṣṇu, Bhāgavata, Nāradīya, Garuḍa, Padma*, and *Varāha*; (2) *rajasic* (excitement, heat) texts, including *Brahma*,

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[33] Rocher, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 37.

[34] Rocher, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 69.

[35] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 486-488.

[36] *Pañcalakṣaṇa* (the five distinguishing marks of the Purāṇas) includes: (1) *sarga*, creation and cosmogony; (2) *pratisarga*, secondary creation, that is, re-creation or destruction; (3) *vaṃśa*, genealogy of gods and patriarchs; (4) *manvantarāṇi*, reigns of *manu*; and (5) *vaṃśānucarita*, history preserved by princes, solar and lunar races and descendants up to modern time. Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 78-80. According to Kirfel, the *pañcalakṣaṇa* is one of the oldest portions of the Purāṇic corpus. Willibald Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa: Versuch einer Textgeschichte* (Bonn: K. Schroeder, 1927), p. xx.

Brahmāṇḍa, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Bhaviṣya* and *Vāmana*; and finally (3) *tamasic* (dark, black) texts, including *Śiva*, *Liṅga*, *Skanda*, *Agni*, *Matsya*, and *Kūrma*.[37]

For purposes of analysis of the variant myths of Hayagrīva, I have divided the Purāṇic texts into (1) 'encyclopedic' texts and (2) sectarian texts, further classified as Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva or Śākta. Because it is difficult to provide precise dates for most of the Purāṇas, I have given approximate (and tentative) dates for each one that is important for the analysis of the development of the Hayagrīva figure. Within each category, I have placed the various texts in chronological order (according to these approximate dates).

2.3.1. *Pan-Indian Encyclopedic Purāṇas*

Encyclopedic Purāṇas is a term first used by Kane in his four-fold classification of the Purāṇic texts. He regards *Agni Purāṇa*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, *Nārada Purāṇa* and *Matsya Purāṇa* as encyclopedic Purāṇas.[38] There are several references to Hayagrīva in these; some references relate to his mythic role and others are iconographical. (Because the focus of this chapter is mythology, I will review only the mythic references here; I will examine the iconographical Purāṇic passages in Chapter Four.)

Matsya Purāṇa 170.1-30 (ca. 200-500 C.E.)[39] contains a story that has elements similar to the Hayagrīva myth of the recovery of the Vedas from the demons contained in the *Mahābhārata*, *Agni Purāṇa*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. However, in *Matsya Purāṇa*, there is no reference to Viṣṇu taking the form of a horse-headed god in order to recover the Vedas; rather, similar to the *Harivaṃśa*, the Purāṇa contains an account of several demons, including Hayagrīva, preparing to fight Viṣṇu with their armies (173).

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[37] Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, p. 92.

[38] Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of the Dharmaśāstras (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India)*, Vol. 5, Part 2 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1962), p. 842. Although Mallmann does not use the term 'encyclopedic' Purāṇa, she does state that *Agni Purāṇa* contains both Tantric and iconographical material reflecting the evolution of popular and esoteric traditions. Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann, *Les Enseignment Iconographiques de L'Agni Purāṇa* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 10.

[39] Kane ca. 200-400 C.E. (1962, pp. 899-900); O'Flaherty ca. 250-500 C.E. (1975, p. 18). *Matsyapurāṇam* (Bombay: Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, 1895 [1907]).

Agni Purāṇa (ca. 800-900 C.E.)[40] contains what is probably the earliest list of the twenty-four *avatāras*.[41] In her study on the *Agni Purāṇa*, de Mallmann claims that Hayagrīva, listed therein, is a 'minor' *avatāra*, not to be confused with the 'major' *avatāra* Kalkin.[42] Hayagriva is mentioned in various lists of Viṣṇu's *avatāras* contained in the *Agni Purāṇa* with respect to ritual. Some of the traditional *avatāras* and Hayagrīva are mentioned together in *Agni Purāṇa* 31.6 ('Mode of Cleansing Oneself and Others'), in which the god Agni describes the ritual of cleansing prescribed in order to free oneself from suffering and to attain joy. He states:

> Salutations ... O Boar (*varāha*), Lord as Man-Lion (*nṛ-siṃha*), Lord as dwarf (*vāmana*), Trivikrama , Lord as Horse-necked One (*hayagrīva-īśa*), Lord of all beings, the Lord of all senses (*hṛṣīkeśa*), destroy my impurity.

An account of a malevolent Hayagrīva is likewise found in *Agni Purāṇa* 2.1-17 ('Manifestation of Viṣṇu as Fish'). Here, Agni portrays Viṣṇu's manifestation as a fish growing in a vessel. Agni describes the growing fish as saying:

> Keśava (Kṛṣṇa) killed the horse-necked demon (*haya-grīva*), the destroyer of the Vedas of Brahmā, and thus protected the Vedic mantra.

Interestingly, similar to the *Harivaṃśa* references to the demonic horse-headed form, here the horse-necked figure (*haya-grīva*) is killed by Kṛṣṇa.

Like *Agni Purāṇa*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (ca. 900 C.E.)[43] is also an encyclopedic text. Chapter 202 provides a list of many different forms (*mūrtis*) of Viṣṇu; the 'traditional ten' are, of course, present, but there are several others, including Hayagrīva: Trivikrama, Nārāyaṇa, Kapila, Datta, Hayagrīva, Makaradhvaja, Nārada, Kūrma, Dhanvantari, Śeṣa, Yajña, and Vyāsa. There is also a complete chapter of fifty-seven verses on 'The Worship of Hayagrīva' (*Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.34) in which Hara describes the deity's worship. Hayagrīva is depicted as a benevolent form of Viṣṇu and

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[40] Kane ca. 900 C.E. (1962, p. 897); O'Flaherty ca. 850 C.E. (1975,p. 17). According to de Mallmann, *Agni Purāṇa* evolved from 6th-9th century C.E. Mallmann, *Les Enseignment Iconographiques*, p. 10. *Agnipurāṇam* (Bombay: Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, 1921).

All quotations from the *Agni Purāṇa* are taken from: *Agni Purāṇa* Parts 1 & 2 (translation and annotation by N. Gangadharan) (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984).

[41] de Mallmann, *Les Enseignment Iconographiques*, p. 10. Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu*, pp. 3-10.

[42] de Mallmann, *Les Enseignment Iconographiques*, pp. 38-40.

[43] O'Flaherty ca. 900 C.E. (1975, p. 18); Hazra ca. 900 C.E. (1940: 144). *Garuḍapurāṇam* (Bombay: Veṅkaṭeśvara Press,1963).

in v. 50 the horse-headed figure (*haya-śiras*) is described as the presiding deity of learning.

2.3.2. *Pan-Indian Non-Sectarian Purāṇas*

The *Brahma Purāṇa* (ca. 900-1350 C.E.)[44], which does not belong to any of the three sectarian groups (i.e., Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śākta), also contains a reference to Hayagrīva. The *Brahma Purāṇa* is best known for its reiteration of stories from the *Harivaṃśa* and other Purāṇas.[45] In *Brahma Purāṇa* 93.19 ('Naraka is Killed'), Kṛṣṇa slays the *asura* Naraka. Vyāsa describes how Kṛṣṇa has slain many demons. In his account of Kṛṣṇa's victory in the killing of Mura, Vyāsa lists several *asuras* that Kṛṣṇa has killed, including Hayagrīva:

> Lord Kṛṣṇa hurled his discus Sudarśana and cut off those nooses. Then the *asura* Mura got up. Keśava killed him. By the fire from the sharp edges of his discus Hari burned the seven thousand sons of Mura as though they were mere moths. O brahmins, after killing Mura, the *horse-necked [demon]* (*haya-grīva*) and Pāñcajana, the intelligent lord hastened to Prāgjyotiṣa.[46]

This story is similar to the several depictions of a malevolent horse-necked figure killed by Kṛṣṇa found in the *Harivaṃśa*.

2.3.3. *Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas*

In the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, there is a variety of references to, and depictions of, Hayagrīva. As in *Agni Purāṇa*, Hayagrīva is listed as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu in both the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (ca. 300-500 C.E.)[47] 5.17.11 contains a list of the various forms Viṣṇu has taken in order to preserve the world:

> He, the unborn, who has preserved the world in various forms as a fish (*matsya*), a tortoise (*kūrma*), a boar (*varāha*), a horse (*aśva*), and a lion (*siṃha*), will this day speak to me!

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[44] O'Flaherty (1975, p. 17).

[45] The *Brahma Purāṇa* is very difficult to date because it is a text that reiterates parts from many different sources. Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 155.

[46] *Brahma Purāṇa*, ed. by J.L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), p. 483.

[47] Kane ca. 300-500 C.E. (1962, p. 909); O'Flaherty ca. 450 C.E. (1975, p. 18). *Visnu Purāṇa*. (Sanskrit and English, Translated by H.H. Wilson; New Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1980). I have provided my own translation.

Also, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 2.2.49-50 describes certain *avatāras* as residing in specific regions:

> Viṣṇu resides, in the region of Bhadrāśva, as the horse-headed One (*haya-śiras*); in Ketumāla, as the boar (*varāha*); in Bhārata, as the tortoise (*kūrma*); in Kuru, as the fish (*matsya*); in His all-pervasive form, the omnipresent Hari is everywhere.[48]

It is important to note that there are only positive depictions of Viṣṇu in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Hayagrīva is depicted only as an *avatāra* of the 'wholly' benevolent Viṣṇu.

Moreover, the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* (ca. 600-1000)[49] contains an important prescriptive description of Hayagrīva. This text is one of the many *upa-purāṇas* that are traditionally considered to be summaries of the eighteen principal Puranas (*maha-purāṇas*).[50] In *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* 3.80.1-6, the sage Mārkaṇḍeya tells Vajra about the horse-necked form of Viṣṇu (*haya-grīva*). Regarding the theological status of the deity (as opposed to *Mahābhārata* 12.327.79-87, which describes Hayagrīva as emanating from Aniruddha), the text claims that Hayagrīva is an emanation of the *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa (3.80.3b). The passage also refers to His *avatāric* activity of recovering the Vedas from the two demons in ancient times (3.80.6).

Finally, Hayagrīva appears in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Tamil Nadu, ca. 10th century).[51] Even though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is believed to have been compiled by a single author,[52] it contains three different *avatāra* lists:

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[48] There are four principal regions in relation to Mt. Meru which is at the centre: (1) Bhadrāśva, which is east of Mt. Meru, (2) Ketumāla, which is west of Mt. Meru, (3) Bhārata, which is south of Mt. Meru, and (4) Kuru, which is north of Mt. Meru. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, pp. 294, 309, 746, 753.

[49] According to Kane, the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* is the earliest *upa-purāṇa* (ca. 600-650 C.E.), whereas the others were written ca. 8th-9th century C.E. up to 1170 C.E. Kane, *History of the Dharmaśāstras*, pp. 834-38. *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* (Bombay: Veṅkateśvara Press, 1912).

[50] The contents of the text can be divided into three sections: (1) geography, astronomy and astrology, (2) Rājā *dharma*, and (3) dancing, music, songs, construction of images, building of temples and the law. Kane, *History of the Dharmaśāstras*, pp. 874-76.

[51] Kane ca. 800-900 C.E. (1962, p. 899); Hazra ca. 500-550 C.E. (1940, pp. 53-54). According to Hacker the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*'s date is ca. 8th century C.E.; however, a more recent study suggests that it is a text from ca. 10th century. See, Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 486-488; Hacker, *Prahlāda, Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*, pp. 121-8.

[52] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 486-488.

I.   ten *avatāras* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.40.17-22):
            (1) Matsya, (2) Hayagrīva, (3) Kūrma, (4) Varāha, (5) Nṛsiṃha, (6)
            Vāmana, (7) Paraśurāma, (8) Rāma , (9) Buddha, and (10) Kalkin.

II.   twenty-two *avatāras* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.3.1-25):
            (1) four sages (Sanatkumāra, Sanaka, Sanandana, and Sanātana), (2)
            Varāha, (3) Nārada, (4) Nara and Nārāyaṇa, (5) Kapila, (6) Datta, (7)
            Yajña, (8) Ṛṣabha, (9) Pṛthu,[53] (10) Matsya, (11) Kūrma, (12)
            Dhanvantari, (13) Mohinī, (14) Nṛsiṃha, (15) Vāmana, (16) Paraśurāma,
            (17) Vyāsa, son of Parāśara, (18) Rāma , (19) Kṛṣṇa, (20) Balarāma , (21)
            Buddha, and (22) Kalkin.

III.   twenty-three *avatāras* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 2.7.1-38):
            (1) Varāha, (2) Suyajña, (3) Kapila, (4) Datta, (5) four sages:
            Sanatkumāra, Sanaka, Sanandana, and Sanātana, (6) Nārāyaṇa and Nara,
            (7) not named,[54] (8) Dhruva,[55] (9) Pṛthu, (10) Ṛṣabha, (11) Hayagrīva,
            (12) Matsya, (13) Kūrma, (14) Nṛsiṃha, (15) Gajendra, (16) Vāmana,
            (17) Dhanvantari, (18) Paraśurāma , (19) Rāma , (20) Balarāma , (21)
            Krsna, (22) Buddha, (23) Kalkin.

It is important to note that two out of the three lists found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* include Hayagrīva. In the first list, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.40.17 praises the One who assumed the form of Hayagrīva for the purpose of killing the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. In the third list, Brahmā relates the various forms of Viṣṇu with their specific activities; concerning Hayagrīva (2.7.11), Brahmā states:

> Then the lord incarnated in my sacrifice as Hayagrīva... He is the Yajña Puruṣa (presiding deity of all sacrifices). He is the main object of worship in the Vedas (or Veda incarnate), the sacrifice incarnate (or for whose grace sacrifices are performed) and the soul of all the deities. From the breath of his nostrils beautiful words (i.e. Vedic hymns) came forth.

This reference to Hayagrīva, in which he is associated with Yajña Puruṣa,

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[53] According to *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 4.15.3, Pṛthu is is an *aṃśa-avatāra*; that is, a partial incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu.

[54] Portions of the chapter are quite obscure and the list of names is inconclusive, i.e., explicit names are not provided for numbers 7, 8, and 9 (only descriptions of figures). The elaborate description of number 7 is: "The great gods verily burn down Kāma, the god of Love, by their angry looks. But they cannot burn down the unbearable anger which consumes them. Such anger is afraid of even entering his pure heart. How can Kāma dare to enter his mind again?" (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 2.7.7).

[55] I have determined numbers 8 and 9 incarnations on the basis of other portions of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: (8) *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 4.8-9; and (9) *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 4.15-23.

'the sacrifice incarnate', may be an allusion to the late Vedic myths (such as *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1-17 and *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 5.1 mentioned above) of Yajña's head being cut off and replaced with a horse's head. However, the whole passage describes Hayagrīva as the incarnate form of, or as the source of, sacrifice, the Vedas, and speech, thus establishing the horse-headed god as the primordial being, an image contained in the *Puruṣa Sūkta*.

In contrast to *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, however, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* combines both the malevolent and benevolent myths of Hayagrīva from the *Mahābhārata* tradition, revealing a lack of consistency even within the same text.[56]

2.3.3.1. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Horse-headed Demon

In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 6.10.19 ('With Vajra Forged, Indra Fights'), sage Śrī Śuka describes the fighting between Indra and the *asuras*. Hayagrīva is depicted as a horse-headed demon led by Vṛtra against Indra:

> Namuci, Śambara, Anarvā, Dvimūrdha (a two-headed demon), Ṛṣabha, Ambara Hayagrīva (a demon with horse's head), Śaṅkuśiras, Vipracitti, Ayomukha, Puloman, Vṛṣparvan, Praheti, Heti, Utkala, the sons of Diti and Danu and Yakṣas, ogres in the thousands, of whom Sumāli and Māli were prominent—all armoured and decorated with gold ornaments—resisted the vanguard of Indra's army, which was unapproachable even to the god of death.

In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8.10.21 ('A Battle between Gods and *Asuras*'), Śrī Śuka elaborates on the battles between Nārāyaṇa and the *dānavas* (demons) and *daityas* (demons). Hayagrīva is described as a demon or *asura*:

> On all sides around him, in their respective aerial cars, attended various squadron-leaders of demons (*asuras*) such as Namuci, Śambara, Bāṇa, Vipracitti, Ayomukha, Dvimūrdha, Kālanābha, Praheti, Heti, Ilvala, Śakuni, Bhūtasantāpa, Vajradaṁṣṭra, Virocana, Hayagrīva, Śaṅkuśiras, Kapila...and others.

In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 7.2.4-5 ('Hiraṇyakaśipu Consoles his Mother and Kinsmen'), Nārada narrates how Hiraṇyakaśipu was agitated because his brother Hiraṇyākṣa was killed by Hari (Viṣṇu). Wanting to take revenge on Hari, Hiraṇyakaśipu rounded up the demons in order to attack the beings who killed his brother on Hari's behalf:

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[56] All quotations from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are taken from: *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* Part 1-3 (Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, Vols.7-9), trans. and annotated G.V. Tagare (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978).

> O Dānavas and Daityas, O Dvimūrdhan (two-headed demon), Oh three-eyed one, Śambara, hundred-armed one, horse-headed one, Namuci, Pāka, Ilvala, Vipracitti, Puloman, Śakuni and others! Listen to my words and then immediately execute them. Do not delay.

There is no description of the actual attack by the demons. The subsequent section relates Hiraṇyakaśipu's performance of the appropriate oblations for his deceased brother, and his comforting of his mother by speaking of the true nature of Reality (*puruṣa* and *prakṛti*).

    Bhāgavata Purāṇa also contains a myth of a horse-headed, malevolent demon who is specifically in conflict with Viṣṇu. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8.24.7-57 ('The Fish incarnation of Lord Hari') describes the Lord as having assumed the form of a fish in order to save the Vedas from the Hayagrīva demon (similar to the myth discussed in *Matsya Purāṇa*). At the end of the Brahmā *kalpa* (era):

> Brahmā caused a flood and a mighty demon called Hayagrīva, who was in the vicinity of Brahmā, carried away the Vedas from the mouth of Brahmā. ... Noticing that act of Hayagrīva, the king of Dānavas, the glorious Supreme Lord Hari, assumed the form of a small glittering fish.

This passage depicts Hayagrīva as the one who steals the Vedas. The role of Hayagrīva in this passage is the reverse of his role as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

2.3.3.2. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: Hayagrīva as God

By way of contrast to the above-mentioned passages, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.4.17 ('Description of the Lord's Incarnation by Drumila') depicts Hayagrīva as one of the various incarnations that Viṣṇu has taken, such as Nārāyaṇa, Rāma, Vāmana, and Paraśurāma:

> Taking the form of Hayagrīva, he killed the demon Madhu and recovered the Vedas from him.

In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5.18.1-6 ('Descriptions of various continents'), Śrī Śuka explains how Bhadrāśravas of the Bhadrāśva continent established the horse-headed lord (*hayaśirṣa*), "who is righteousness incarnate in their minds", by praying:

> Salutations to the glorious Dharma, the embodiment of righteousness, represented by the sacred syllable *Oṃ*, the purifier of the mind! Praise the Lord for his strange and mysterious acts. ... The Vedas attribute to you the authorship of the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe, even though you are not the doer conditioned [by *māyā*]. ... You are essentially

different from all things. ... You assumed the horse-headed form (*haya-grīva*), and recovered from nether worlds the Vedas which were concealed there by the demon [Madhu], at the end of the *yuga* and returned them to the suppliant sage Brahmā.

In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 7.9.37 ('Prahlāda eulogizes Narasiṃha Incarnation'), Prahlāda describes Hayagrīva's act of recovering the Vedas thus:

Assuming the form of a horse-necked god, Your worshipful self killed the extremely powerful enemies of the Vedas, Madhu and Kaiṭabha by name, who were the very embodiments of *rajas* and *tamas*. You thus restored the Vedas to him [Brahmā]. The Vedas declare that You, most beloved person, consist of pure *sattva*.

This passage is similar to *Mahābhārata* 12.327.79-87 in that the *guṇa* theory is linked with the myth of Hayagrīva (who is *sattvic*) recovering the Vedas from the demons Madhu (who is *rajasic*) and Kaiṭabha (who is *tamasic*).

2.3.4. *Śaiva Purāṇas*

The Śaiva Purāṇa called *Skanda Purāṇa* (ca. 700-1150 C.E.)[57] contains a passage that characterizes Hayagrīva as benevolent. Furthermore, unlike the passages in the other Purāṇas (except for *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*), this passage explains the origins of the horse-head based on the Brāhmaṇic myth of the beheading sacrifice (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1.1-17; *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 7.5.6). Here is a summary of the passage about Hayagrīva in the *Skanda Purāṇa* passage (*Brahmā Kāṇḍa* 3-2.14-15):

Skanda asks Īśvara [Śiva] how Hari [Viṣṇu] became one with a horse's head, caused the death of the vile demon, and endeavoured to elucidate the meaning of the Vedas. Vyāsa explained that the gods commenced a sacrifice while chanting the Vedic mantras. All went to the Milk Ocean. They asked Bṛhaspati to tell them the whereabouts of Mahāviṣṇu. After meditating, Bṛhaspati pointed out Hari's location. They saw Mahāviṣṇu, the demon-killer, sitting in a meditative posture with a bow. They attempted to wake him up and pulled the bow of Hari. As the ants ate the cord of the bow, his head was cut off and went to heaven. Brahmā and the learned gods then asked Viśvakarma what they could do now. Brahmā asked the carpenters to make

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a head for Viṣṇu. They brought the horse's head from one of the chariot
horses and fixed it to the headless body of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu then said he was
pleased and would give the book to all the residents of heaven. Pleased to
have Hayagrīva, the *brahmins* performed the sacrifice.

Interestingly, although this myth told in *Skanda Purāṇa* depicts Hayagrīva
as benevolent and explains the origin of his horse-head, there is no mention
of Hayagrīva's benevolent act of recovering the Vedas from the demons
Madhu and Kaiṭabha. However, there is reference to his elucidation of the
meaning of the Vedas and destruction of a vile demon.

By way of contrast, in Chapter 9 of *Skanda Purāṇa*, which explains the
procedure for constructing a *maṇḍala* for worship, Hayagrīva is described
as the horse-headed one (2.9.29) among many other forms of Viṣṇu (the
chapter also describes different forms of Śakti and Śiva). Lastly, in a list of
demons that Viṣṇu has killed, there is a reference to the horse-necked one
(*aśva-grīva*) among others like Vipracitti, Virocana, Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

2.3.5. Śākta Purāṇas

Lalitā Māhātmya, an addendum to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (ca. 350-950
C.E.),[58] appears in the form of a dialogue between Agastya and a horse-
necked sage (*hayagrīva*). They describe the origins of the goddess Lalitā,
that is, her emergence out of a sacrifice offered to the goddess by Indra,
and her triumph in destroying the *asura* Bhaṇḍa. Hayagrīva is referred to
as the benevolent incarnation of Viṣṇu in both Chapter 5 ('Agastya's
Pilgrimage to Sacred Places: Manifestation of Viṣṇu') and Chapter 6 ('A
Dialogue Between Agastya and Hayagrīva: The Nature of Violence etc.').
However, although Chapter 5 of the *Lalitā Māhātmya* describes the horse-
necked deity (*haya-grīva*) as being one among several other forms of
Viṣṇu, both Chapters 5 and 6 also refer to Hayagrīva as a great sage who
teaches Agastya the true nature of Reality. Although Hayagrīva is said to
possess knowledge, he is not depicted as the Supreme God, because the
purpose of this text is the establishment of the supremacy of the goddess.

The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (ca. 850-1350 C.E.),[59] another Śākta text,

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[58] Kane ca. 400-600 C.E. (1962, p. 895-6); O'Flaherty ca.350-950 C.E. (1975,p. 17).
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, Vol. 25, (translation and annotation by Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare)
(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), pp. 1031-1042.

[59] O'Flaherty, 1975,p. 18. According to Hazra, the text's dates are ca. 1000-1100 C.E.
Rajendra Chandra Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas. Vol. 2 Śākta and Non-Sectarian
Upapurāṇas* (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1963), p. 346.
Devībhāgavata Purāṇa, in *The Sacred Books of the Hindus*, Vol. 26, (edited by B.D. Basu

contains a story about Hayagrīva that, like *Skanda Purāṇa*, includes the explanation of how Viṣṇu obtained a horse-head based on the later Brāhmaṇic myths (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1.1-17; *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 7.5.6). Curiously, the passage in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* also combines the stories about the benevolent and malevolent horse-headed figures. *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.5.1-112 ('On the Narrative of Hayagrīva') tells the story of Hayagrīva thus (paraphrased):

> The *ṛṣis* ask Śrī Sūta to describe the details of the horse-necked Lord (*haya-grīva*). Śrī Sūta said that after a battle for ten thousand years, Lord Nārāyaṇa seated himself on the throne in some lovely place. Placing his head on the front of his bow with the bow strung erect on the ground, Nārāyaṇa fell fast asleep. Seeing the Lord of the universe asleep, Brahmā, Rudra and the other gods (*devas*) became anxious. Brahmā created white ants (*vamrī*) so that they might eat up the forepart of the bow that was lying on the ground, causing the other endpart to rise up and thus break his sleep. The head of the God of gods (*devadeva*) Viṣṇu vanished; nobody knew where it fell.
> When the darkness disappeared, Brahmā and Śiva (*mahādeva*) saw the disfigured body of Viṣṇu with its head cut off. They could not understand why there was a delay in fixing again the head on Viṣṇu's body. Brahmā suggested that they ask the Goddess (*devī*) to help them, so they propitiated her. The Goddess explained why Viṣṇu had been beheaded. Lakṣmī, out of anger because of Viṣṇu's laughing at her face, and fear that He might take another woman, cursed: "May your head fall off". As a result, His head fell into the ocean of salt. The head was put back on because, in ancient days, a famous demon (*daitya*) named Hayagrīva practiced severe penance (*tapasyā*) on the bank of the Sarasvatī river. Hearing the words of the Goddess, the demon instantly got up, circumambulated her, and fell down with devotion at her feet. Demon Hayagrīva said: "If it be you are not willing to grant me immortality, then grant me this boon that my death may not occur from any other being than from one who has a horse-face. Let Viśvākarma take a horse-head and fix it on the headless body of Viṣṇu." Then Lord Hayagrīva will slay the vicious wicked *asura* (*haya-grīva*) for the good of the *devas*.

Clearly, this passage from the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* combines the malevolent and benevolent depictions of the horse-headed figure; that is, the malevolent demon-Hayagrīva is killed by the benevolent Lord Hayagrīva. However, like the passage in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, even though there is a reference to the 'beheading' sacrifice of Viṣṇu, there is no reference to Hayagrīva recovering the Vedas.

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and translation by Vijnanananda) (New York: AMS Press, 1974).

   As in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, a passage about Hayagrīva in the
Kālikā Purāṇa (ca. 1350 C.E.)[60] narrates a story in which Hayagrīva is
portrayed as both demonic and benevolent. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* consists of
a narrative framework in which Kamaṭha and other sages address a number
of questions to Mārkaṇḍeya, who has taken up residence near the
Himālayas. *Kālikā Purāṇa* 81.74-77 tells the story of how Viṣṇu-
Hayagrīva, for the welfare of men, gods, and demons, killed *jvarāsura*
(demon of fever) who stayed at Maṇikūṭa Hill. Curiously, there is another
reference in the text (*Kālikā Purāṇa* 83.24) that describes how, after Viṣṇu
killed the demon-Hayagrīva, the Lord settled at Maṇikūṭa Hill. Not only is
Hayagrīva depicted as a benevolent god, but he is described as having
killed the demon-Hayagrīva. Similar to the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the
stories in the *Kālikā Purāṇa* reflect the synthesis in the Hayagrīva figures
of both demon and god.
   There is an account of Hayagrīva in the eightieth chapter of the *Kālikā
Purāṇa*:

> A river known as Sarasvatī is where the other fish flag is hoisted. On the
> Eastern side of the Sarasvatī river is a river by the name of Dīpvatī. This river
> originates from the Himālayas. It is called Dīpvatī because it removes the
> darkness from the *devas* and *manuṣas*. On the eastern side of this river is a
> mountain called Śrīgata where a *liṅga* for Bhṛgu has been established. Lord
> Viśvanātha accompanied by Śiva *liṅga*, Viśvadevī, and Mahādevī who is in
> the form of the *yonī*, fought with [the demon] Hayagrīva where Viśvanātha
> dwells. The place where Hayagrīva was killed is called Maṇikūṭa. A person
> known as Śarada performs *pūjā* for Durgā along with [reciting] the
> Hayagrīva mantra in worship of the deity whose flag is Garuḍa. One who
> worships Śaṅkara by Kanesura *tantra* and mantra and who performs *pūjā*
> with great devotion on the twelfth day (*dvādaśi*), or on the eigth day or the
> fourteenth day will stay in the place of Viṣṇu for one crore [10 million] years
> (*kalpa*) in the place of Śiva. After living so many years in Viṣṇu's and Śiva's
> abode, he will come to the earth and take the form of Brahmā.

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   [60] O'Flaherty, 1975,p. 18. According to Gonda, the text's dates are ca. 1300 C.E. Rocher,
History of Indian Literature, p. 182.
   The *Kālikā Purāṇa*, a Śākta text, often goes under the title of *Kālikā Tantra*. The text is
believed to have originated in Kāmarūpa, a part of Bengal. The extant Purāṇa is different
from an earlier one that is believed to have contained fewer Tantric elements. For an
extensive discussion of Śākta Tantric practices according to the text, see K.R. van Kooij,
Worship of the Goddess According to the Kālikā Purāṇa, Part I (Leiden: Brill, 1972).
Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 179-182.
   Kālikāpurāṇam (edited by Śrī Viśvanārāyaṇa Śāstrī) (Vārāṇasī: Caukhambā Sanskrit
Series Office, 1972).

Here, Hayagrīva is portrayed as *both* a demonic figure who was killed by Śarada and a mantraic-deity in the form of Hayagrīva. Through meditation on the Hayagrīva-mantra,[61] along with performance of Durgā *pūjā*, one is said to attain a lengthy stay in the abodes of Viṣṇu and Śiva, as well as eventual rebirth as Brahmā. Interestingly, the Hayagrīva-mantra is associated with the Garuḍa flag; an association of Hayagrīva with Garuḍa appears in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition (see Chapter Six).

3. ANALYSIS OF HAYAGRĪVA IN THE PAN-INDIAN TEXTS

The Epic and Purāṇic figure of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva is linked, by some scholars, to the story of the sacrifice of Dadhyañc contained in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (as discussed in the previous chapter).[62] Although the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* myth describes the beheading of Viṣṇu, it does not directly link the horse-headed deity with Viṣṇu. The horse-headed deity first appears in the Epic *Mahābhārata*.

3.1. *Hayagrīva: Benevolent and Malevolent Deity*

Although the horse-headed figure is not included in the lists of *avatāras* in the *Mahābhārata*, there are several epithets and stories in the text that refer to Viṣṇu as having a horse's head. The *Mahābhārata* contains the imagery of a horse-headed figure as (1) a demon (*hayagrīva*), and (2) a god (*haya-śiras*; *aśva-śiras*). Furthermore, the text contains the foundational and familiar Vaiṣṇava myth about the horse-headed figure's (*haya-śiras*; *aśva-śiras*) recovery of the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. By way of contrast, the *Harivaṃśa* depicts the horse-headed figure (*hayagrīva*) solely as a mighty demon in conflict with Kṛṣṇa, whom Kṛṣṇa eventually kills.

In the Purāṇas (such as *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*), Hayagrīva is included in the lists of *avatāras*. He is described both as a demon (*hayagrīva*) whom Lord Viṣṇu kills (*Agni Purāṇa* 2.1-17; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8.24.7-57) as well as an incarnation of Viṣṇu (*hayagrīva*) who

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[61] The Purāṇa continues to have an important role in Durgā *pūjā*—central in the region of Bengal. van Kooij, *Worship of the Goddess*, p. 65.

[62] O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts,* pp. 218-219.; Courtright, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 95-97.

saves the Vedas for the welfare of the cosmos (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.17.11;
Bhāgavata Purāṇa 7.9.37). Two Purāṇas contain a further development of
the Hayagrīva myth—the combination of the stories of both a benevolent
and malevolent Hayagrīva (*Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.5.1-112; *Kālikā
Purāṇa* 80). R.H. van Gulik understands this paradoxical combination of
the malevolent horse-headed figure killing Hayagrīva as follows:

> In the mythical world of thought we distinguish in general two contrary
> tenors. On one side an inclination to diverge and differentiate one and the
> same theme is dissected into small subdivisions, which gradually loosen
> themselves totally from the old connection and develop into independent
> themes. On the other hand, however, a converging and assimilating tenor is
> traceable; two or more themes, which originally have nothing in common,
> become identified through an incidental conformity, and finally melt together
> in unity. In the history of the development of the horse-headed figure we
> meet with the apparent case of convergence. The final result is one of those
> paradoxical combinations, much beloved by Indians: Hayagrīva kills
> Hayagrīva.[63]

One basic characteristic of Hinduism is its tendency to agglomerate
—rather than to reject—ideas, images, rituals and the like. This inevitably
results in the incorporation of contradictory viewpoints and beliefs within
a single religious complex. Nevertheless, all the contradictions that occur
are accepted, because they are considered to be part of the whole. This
characteristic of Hinduism is evident in many Purāṇas. The compilers or
authors often attempt to incorporate earlier images and myths into their
own system. As van Buitenen has written:

> The blending together of different creation myths [in Purāṇic texts] has been
> ingeniously and creatively, if not always consistently, accomplished. And the
> attempt to reconcile apparently different views of the creative process reveals
> a distinguishing feature of Purāṇic style as a whole, perhaps of Hindu
> thought as a whole: a preference for the synthesis of disparate views into a
> larger whole rather than the rejection of apparently dissident elements in
> favour of a single view considered to be exclusively true.[64]

Going beyond van Buitenen, I would argue that, notwithstanding the
inconsistency in the descriptions of the Hayagrīva myth in the Epics and

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[63] R.H. van Gulik, *Hayagrīva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1935), pp. 19, 95-96.
[64] C. Dimmitt and J.A.B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), p. 16.

Purāṇas, there is evident, nonetheless, a selective process in some of the Purāṇas whereby certain elements are synthesized while others are rejected. One can observe this process most clearly in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas. The primary contradiction contained in the Epic and Purāṇic texts is that Hayagrīva is depicted not only as the incarnation of Viṣṇu, but also as a demon whom Viṣṇu kills. There are two main versions of the story of Hayagrīva proper: (1) a benevolent Hayagrīva, who recovers the Vedas, and (2) a malevolent figure who is killed by Viṣṇu.

The *combination of the benevolent and malevolent myths is significantly observed only in non-Vaiṣṇava texts*, such as the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (1.5.1-112) and the *Kālikā Purāṇa* (Chapter 80). Although one Vaiṣṇava text (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*) refers to both portrayals of Hayagrīva, no synthesis of the malevolent and benevolent depictions of Hayagrīva is provided: the text presents the two depictions as two different figures.

The ambivalent nature of gods, whereby they are depicted as both malevolent and benevolent, is perhaps reflective of change over time. It is to be expected, particularly in an oral tradition, that myths would undergo change and transformation. The process of change in the myths is undoubtedly influenced by the different milieus in which they are being told, and then once again as they begin to be compiled into texts. Scholars need to deal with the question of additions and substitutions by asking why a storyteller or a compiler would choose certain motifs and details and leave out others. It is important to reflect on what is the purpose of combination, omission or synthesis of the various and disparate elements of a myth.

Because it is not likely that compilers have blindly omitted or incor-porated myths into their texts, it is misleading to remove the myths from their context (as is done by scholars employing the structural approach in the understanding of myth). Myths do not exist in a vacuum, but reflect the specific religious world-view and theological orientation of any given text. Myths are thus not fixed entities; rather, they undergo transformation in particular contexts: (1) through time (diachronic), and (2) as a sectarian viewpoint in relation to other sectarian viewpoints in a given period of time (synchronic).

3.2. *Myth and the 'Histories' of Myth: Transformation Through Time*

Although myths become transformed over time, they do not necessarily change at random. Rather, they change as religious sects adapt Epic and

Purāṇic myths to their own theological/religious agendas. It is therefore important to view the myths in their textual and religio-historical context, because the variations of a single Hindu myth in many cases reflect the development and evolution of the many religious sects. Myths, in the diverse context of India, have a variety of 'histories'. Conversely, new myths also arise out of the interaction among the many histories. A general chronology of the Epics and Purāṇas allows one to view better each text within its own general religio-historical and specific theological context. Paul Hacker has found that an analysis of the development of religious terminology can establish the relative chronology of the variant Epic and Purāṇic myths or texts, which, in turn, an be used to demonstrate the development of different religious systems. For example, through his rigorous study on Prahlāda, Hacker was able to trace the development of *bhakti*. He identifies *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as the last text to reflect intellectual devotion (*bhakti-yoga*) and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the first text to reflect emotional devotion (*bhakti*).[65] Although it is difficult to date the Epic and Purāṇic texts precisely, it does an injustice to the Purāṇas to remove them completely from their *most probable* chronological (and religio-historical) contexts.

3.2.1 *Overview of the Diachronic Dimension of the Hayagrīva Myths*

I.   Vedic period (1500-500 B.C.E.)

      1.   Early period (1500-900 B.C.E.) Viṣṇu's association with demon-slaying activity, and his image as a sun-horse: *Ṛg Veda*

      2.   Late period (900-500 B.C.E.) Viṣṇu's/Yajña's beheading sacrifice: *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*

II.   Classical period (200 B.C.E.-500 C.E)

      A.   Hayagrīva god: *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*
      B.   horse-headed demon: *Harivaṃśa*
      C.   benevolent and malevolent figures (not synthesized): *Mahābhārata*, *Matsya Purāṇa*
      D.   benevolent and malevolent figures (synthesized): none in texts surveyed

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[65] Hacker, Prahlāda, Werder und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt.

III. Early Medieval period (500-800 C.E.)

    A.   horse-headed god: none in texts surveyed
    B.   horse-headed demon: none in texts surveyed
    C.   benevolent and malevolent figures (not synthesized): none in texts surveyed
    D.   benevolent and malevolent figures (synthesized): none in texts surveyed

IV. Middle Medieval period (800-1000 C.E.)

    A.   horse-headed god: *Nārada Purāṇa, Garuḍa Purāṇa*
    C.   benevolent and malevolent figures (not synthesized): *Agni Purāṇa, Bhāgavata Purāṇa; Skanda Purāṇa*
    D.   benevolent and malevolent figures (synthesized): none in texts surveyed
    E.   continuities with I above, containing an explanation for the origins of the horse's head (beheading sacrifice): *Skanda Purāṇa*

V. Late Medieval period (1000-1500 C.E.)

    B.   horse-headed demon: *Brahma Purāṇa*
    D.   benevolent and malevolent figures (synthesized): *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa, Kālikā Purāṇa*
    E.   continuities with I, containing an explanation for the origins of the horse's head (beheading sacrifice): *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*

3.2.2. *Hayagrīva and the God-Demon Conflict*

One of the important themes on evil that Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty) traces in *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* is the god-demon conflict.[66] She casts light on the cycle of the god-demon conflict and

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[66] In *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*, O'Flaherty traces the theme of evil and the various concepts of evil in Hindu mythology, and in doing so demonstrates several mythic patterns. She does not look at evil as described in chronological periods from the Vedas to

distinguishes three historical phases of it in Hindu mythology: (1) the Vedic phase, (2) the post-Vedic phase, and (3) the Bhakti phase.[67] She relates each of these phases to the mythic pattern of the recovery of the Vedas: (1) Viṣṇu takes the form of Hayagrīva in order to recover the stolen Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha; (2) Viṣṇu assumes the form of Mahāmāyā (Great Illusion) in order to corrupt the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha and convert them to Buddhism (neither the horse-headed deity nor the motif of recovering the Vedas is actually part of this version), and (3) Viṣṇu takes the form of a fish (*matsya*) to recover the Vedas stolen from the horse-headed demon.[68]

O'Flaherty's delineation of the three phases of the god-demon cycle is highly original. It certainly has, besides, the attractive merit of cutting through the awesome complexity characteristic of Hinduism to lay bare a pattern of utter simplicity in the cycle of the god-demon conflict over the entire course of the development of Hinduism. This aspect, and her

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the present day, because "Indian religious texts are difficult to date, it is more interesting to trace the different concepts of evil, finally also because there is no clear cut development of Hindu mythology". She does not make generalizations on the basis of a single Indian concept of evil because there are many contradictions and variations in Hindu myths. Rather, she pursues several themes related to the Indian concepts of evil, and attempts to trace the themes back to their earliest source or sources. In effect, she finds that archaic concepts from the *Vedas* re-emerge in later texts, along with later dissident themes. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 11-13.

[67] In the Vedic phase, *yajña* (sacrifice) is central. Humans must perform sacrifice in order to please the gods and to gain boons in heaven (*svarga*). Humans are dependent on the gods for prosperity and happiness. Here, the gods are in harmony with humans, but in conflict with the demons. The gods inflict evil upon the demons in order to maintain their own power and status.

The post-Vedic phase, on the other hand, emphasizes ascetic and meditative practices for attaining spiritual power. Here, for the attainment of salvation, humans are independent of the gods. Indeed, *brahmins* consider themselves more important to the cosmic order than the gods. Thus, humans are in competition with the gods. Evil in humans, which is the consequence of being in alignment with the demons, causes the omniscient and omnipotent gods to inflict delusion and pain upon their human enemies. Priests, then, take on the role of mediator between humans and the gods.

Finally, in the Bhakti phase, the path of 'selfless' devotion to God is regarded as superior. Humans and 'good demons' are no longer in conflict with the gods. The myths return to the Vedic concept of good humans as dependent on God for their well being. God is benevolent and, out of compassion, wishes humans to attain salvation by His divine grace. During the Bhakti stage, God is reconciled with humans. O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil*, pp. 79-93.

[68] See O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil*, pp. 100-101. See also *Mahābhārata* 12.335.21-65; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.17.11; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5.18.1-6. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 81.49-77. *Agni Purāṇa* 2.1-17; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8.24.7-57

application of the structural approach more generally to the study of mythology, ought to have special appeal in the study of comparative mythology and the psychoanalytical interpretation of myth. However, despite the evident intellectual breakthrough, the simplicity is achieved at a price, especially from the perspective of the history of religions. For, O'Flaherty's claim about the correspondence between the god-demon conflict cycle and the myth of the recovery of the Vedas emerges as unconvincing when viewed against the *textual context* of the sources of the myths. In attempting to demonstrate the thematic cycles of the recovery of the Vedas, O'Flaherty is highly selective in her choice of passages from the various texts. For instance, she cites the mythic version from *Mahābhārata* 12.335.21-65, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.17.11, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5.18.1-6 for the first 'Vedic phase', and from *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 81.49-77 for the version of the second 'post-Vedic phase'. However, the versions of the myth for both phases are, in fact, taken from what are clearly post-Vedic texts. Or, take again the third 'Bhakti phase'. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is clearly a Bhakti text, and thus can be considered appropriate for the third 'Bhakti phase' about the demon form of Hayagrīva who steals the Vedas, which are recovered by Matsya. However, this variant of the myth is also present in *Agni Purāṇa* 2.1-17—an encyclopedic Purāṇa which pre-dates the Bhakti phase. Further, it is not clear how this particular myth from the *Agni* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* can be regarded as reflecting the 'Bhakti phase', since the mythic motif of the stolen Vedas being rescued by god has been categorized as belonging to the 'Vedic phase'; the difference between the two is chiefly in respect of the specific *avatāra* of Viṣṇu rescuing the Vedas.

In *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*,[69] O'Flaherty distinguishes the three phases of the mythic transformation of Hayagrīva: (1) a benevolent deity, (2) a malevolent deity, and (3) a synthesis of the

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[69] Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty) looks at Hayagrīva in the larger context of the reversal of roles seen in some figures of Hindu mythology. She maintains that a common pattern in Hinduism is that a myth initially depicts a figure as benevolent, then as malevolent, and finally effects a 'synthesis' of the two. According to O'Flaherty's interpretation, Hayagrīva exemplifies this pattern. One myth discussed by her describes Viṣṇu taking the form of a horse-headed man in order to save the Vedas, whereas in another myth a horse-headed man steals the Vedas. Finally, according to O'Flaherty, there is a 'synthesis' of both benevolent and malevolent myths of Hayagrīva; that is, a horse-headed demon steals the Vedas, but then Viṣṇu becomes a horse-headed deity in order to kill the horse-headed demon. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

two. She regards the third phase as a synthesis of the two previous myths. Interestingly, she altogether ignores (1) the texts that contain both myths of the benevolent Hayagrīva and those of the malevolent Hayagrīva, but in which there is no synthesis of the two stories (*Agni Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*), and (2) those that omit references to the demonic Hayagrīva altogether (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*). Furthermore, the texts that agglomerate the benevolent and malevolent aspects of the Hayagrīva deity/demon actually omit the myth of the benevolent Hayagrīva who recovered the Vedas from the demons (the central Vaiṣṇava myth of the benevolent Hayagrīva). Indeed, the stories that combine the benevolent and malevolent aspects of the deity are not found in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇic texts surveyed, the sect in which Hayagrīva has come to have the greatest significance.

   Although the synthesis of the god-demon myth is contained in some of the later Purāṇic texts (*Devībhāgavata* and *Kālikā*), it is apparent that O'Flaherty displaces the variants from their contexts and, as a result, overlooks any possible religio-historical significance that the 'synthesis' of the benevolent and malevolent Hayagrīva may reflect.

3.3. *The 'Histories' of Hayagrīva: Transformation Among the Sects*

The Purāṇic texts must be viewed not only in terms of their overall content, but in terms of what they add or omit from any particular set of myths. In the transmission of the prominent symbolic structure of any given myth, that myth is likely to be transformed as it is written or adapted to a specific pre-determined sectarian or theological framework. The specific features of each myth, incorporated into any given Purāṇa, reflect the point of view (whether philosophical or devotional) of the Purāṇic compiler(s) and his/their tradition. Myths or certain of their elements and motifs may, therefore, be included, excluded, or transformed for reasons that go far beyond the myth itself.

   In her analysis of the Hayagrīva myth in *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*, O'Flaherty claims that the inconsistent depiction of Hayagrīva in the Purāṇic literature is one that is commonly found in myths, as is the combination of both the benevolent and malevolent aspects. Although it is true that this feature may be observed in the Hayagrīva myth,

a genuine question can be raised as to whether this is a generalized attribute of myth, the result of particular sectarian readings of the myth, or both.[70]

It is important to note that the Purāṇas contain different theological and philosophical world-views and the Hayagrīva myth or myths that are contained in, or absent from, specific Purāṇas may be more reflective of the world-view of a particular sect than of any linear or cyclical development of the myth. For example, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a Vaiṣṇava sectarian text that is heavily influenced by the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. On the other hand, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is a Vaiṣṇava text that contains certain elements which later came to be associated with Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. In contrast, the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* is a Śākta sectarian text, while *Agni Purāṇa* and *Matsya Purāṇa* are encyclopedic ones (with Āgamic influences). The particularly sectarian theological context of each text emerges as significant for the Hayagrīva myth, as is demonstrated in the table below.

3.3.1. *Overview of the Synchronic Dimension of the Hayagrīva Myths*

I.   Vedic antecedents to the horse-headed deity in the *Brāhmaṇas*

II.   *Mahābhārata*: Hayagrīva god and a horse-headed demon (not synthesized)
        Harivaṃśa (Kṛṣṇaite):[71] horse-headed demon only

III.   encyclopedic Purāṇas: Hayagrīva god and a horse-headed demon (not synthesized)

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[70] Likewise, in his mystical interpretation of mythology, Kees W. Bolle states that scholars have the tendency to focus on a single aspect of a story, such as viewing it as a reflection of sectarianism. Instead, he asks that readers should view the valuable 'inner' and 'subtle' dialectic present in narrative form. Bolle asserts that it is appropriate to employ the mystical term *coincidentia oppositorum* in the stories about Vṛtra who in the primeval battles is a monster who slayed a *brahmin*, yet later in the Hindu tradition is made into a *brahmin*. Such an orientation may also hold true in respect of an overall look at a given mythology. However, the orientation does not have universal applicability. Interestingly, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas have never recognized the malevolent story of the horse-headed figure, let alone the combination of the benevolent and malevolent stories (see 'The Local Story of Vedānta Deśika at Tiruvahīndrapuram' in Chapter Seven). Kees W. Bolle, *The Freedom of Man in Myth* (Nashville, Tennesse: Vanderbilt University Press, 1965), p. 53.

[71] See section 'The *Harivaṃśa*: Horse-headed Enemy of Viṣṇu' above for explanation as to why a Kṛṣṇaite text depicts Hayagrīva as a demon.

IV.   sectarian Purāṇas:

    A.   Vaiṣṇava: Hayagrīva god only
    B.   Advaita Vedānta (Kṛṣṇaite/Vaiṣṇava): Hayagrīva god and
            a horse-headed demon (not synthesized)
    C.   Śaiva: Hayagrīva god and horse-headed demon (not
            synthesized)
    D.   Śākta: Hayagrīva god and horse-headed demon
            (synthesized)

The above table makes clear that, by the time of the Epics and Purāṇas, any given variant of the Hayagrīva myth is related to the particular theological context in which it appears. For instance, why is the synthesis of the benevolent and malevolent horse-headed deity found in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*—a Śākta sectarian text—but not in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, a Vaiṣṇava sectarian text? And, why does the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*—a Vaiṣṇava sectarian but heavily Advaita Vedāntic text—contain both benevolent and malevolent depictions of Hayagrīva, yet no synthesis of the two? The Hayagrīva Purāṇic myths are thus not fixed entities, nor can one discern a linear development in the myth over time; rather, the myths appear most often to have undergone transformation related to particular contexts, according to the agendas of the Purāṇic compiler(s).

    The character of the sectarian Purāṇas reflects the relationship between the different religious streams in India. As demonstrated above, the particular usage of the Hayagrīva myth can have disparate theological implications and significance. Although there may be continuity of certain themes and motifs that are contained in the myths, the discontinuities often reflect a different theological or philosophical matrix. There is a solely benevolent depiction of Hayagrīva in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, a Vaiṣṇava text, because for Vaiṣṇavas an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu can, by definition, possess no trace of evil. For Vaiṣṇavas, Viṣṇu is wholly taintless.[72] It would have been philosophically and theologically impossible for the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* to contain depictions of an *avatāra* of the wholly benevolent Viṣṇu as having a demonic past, or even to acknowledge another horse-headed figure who is demonic. This only further reinforces the idea that one can only speak of the '*histories*' of Hayagrīva.

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[72] *ŚrīBhāṣya* 3.2.5.20. Rāmānuja, *The Vedānta Sūtras with the Śrī Bhashya of Rāmānujā-chārya*, 3 vols. (translation by M. Rangacharya and M.V. Varadaraja Aiyanger) (Nungambakkam, Madras: The Educational Publishing Co., 1961, 1964, 1965).

It is important to note that although the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a Kṛṣṇaite text, it includes myths both of the benevolent and malevolent Hayagrīva. However, it does not agglomerate the disparate myths of the horse-headed figure; rather, its author simply relates the two different stories, with no attempt at integration. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, although it is centred around Viṣṇu and his *avatāras*, is Advaitic in orientation.[73] This orientation means that all manifestations of Viṣṇu are in the realm of *māyā*, and the author is therefore less compelled to establish the wholly taintless nature of any particular form of Viṣṇu. The text can therefore contain both a benevolent and a malevolent depiction of Hayagrīva. Indeed, there may well be two different horse-headed figures included in the same text.

By way of contrast, non-Vaiṣṇavas (such as Śaivas and Śāktas) view Viṣṇu and his *avatāras* as having only minor importance in their overall theological understanding. Moreover, the ambivalent depictions of Hayagrīva are continuous with the ambivalent nature of Śiva and the Goddess. The synthesis of benevolence and malevolence with regards to Hayagrīva that is found in *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Kālikā Purāṇa* would therefore not be problematic for Śaivas or Śāktas, who revere Śiva or Śakti, respectively, not Viṣṇu, as the Supreme Deity. The ambivalent natures of both their deities (Śiva and Śakti) have demonic features incorporated into the very nature of the Supreme. Furthermore, the synthesis of the malevolent and benevolent aspects of Hayagrīva found in *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (a late text compiled ca. 11th century C.E.) can be justifiably interpreted as the later variant of a myth used in order to demonstrate sectarian superiority: the Hindu depiction of the Hindu Hayagrīva god who kills the Buddhist Hayagrīva figure depicted as a demonic form of Hayagrīva because it is from (at least, represents) the Mahayāna/Mantrayāna Buddhist pantheon.

Furthermore, the story of the beheading sacrifice contained in the Vedas (discussed in Chapter Two) reappears only in two *late* Purāṇas (*Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*), which use the story in order to explain how Viṣṇu came to have a horse's head. Although the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* story of Dadhyañc may provide a paradigm for the origins of Hayagrīva, it is not a salient feature of the Hayagrīva myth in general, and, in fact, only reappears in the mythic variants of these two very late Purāṇas

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[73] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 494-497. Based on his study of Prahlāda myths, Hacker observed the *advaitin* orientation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, even though it was not identical to any known *advaitin* philosophical system. Hacker, *Prahlāda, Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*, pp. 125-6.

as an explanation for the origin of Hayagrīva: the beheading of Viṣṇu and the replacement with the sacrificial horse-head. I believe it is significant that the mythic strand of the beheading sacrifice found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is maintained only in non-Vaiṣṇava texts. Furthermore, the two myths that contain the explanation of the origins of the horse- head make no mention of the important Vaiṣṇava myth of Hayagrīva, as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, recovering the Vedas from the two demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

It must be emphasized that none of the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas I have surveyed incorporate any stories regarding the origins of Hayagrīva; such explanations are only found in a Śaiva and a Śākta Purāṇa. Why would Vaiṣṇavas not include this strand of the explanation of the origin of Hayagrīva, especially given the fact that they so often attempt to legitimize their sectarian tradition by linking it with the Vedas? One could, I suppose, argue that Hayagrīva's origin is simply taken for granted. But I find it significant that not even a single Vaiṣṇava text (Purāṇic or Āgamic) that I surveyed repeats the myth of the beheading sacrifice; that is, there are no origin stories for Hayagrīva. For Vaiṣṇavas (unlike for Śaivas), Hayagrīva is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu who came to earth to restore the *dharma* at a certain time and place, and thus by nature is 'wholly' benevolent; because he is an incarnation, no exploration of his origins is necessary. For Vaiṣṇavas, Viṣṇu's benevolent *avatāric* forms—whether Hayagrīva or Nṛsiṃha—require no explanation as to how they obtained their animal heads. This understanding would necessarily exclude the Western interpretation of sacrifice as a means to initiate a former 'demon' into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon as an *avatāra*. Although the various forms of Viṣṇu are by their very nature benevolent without a demonic past, the many forms of Śiva are commonly depicted as ambivalent, even gruesome in imagery. Thus, the motif of the beheading sacrifice may be acceptable in the Śaiva 'histories' of the ambivalent gods; it is, however, simply not so in the Vaiṣṇava stories of the various incarnations of Viṣṇu.[74]

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[74] One case of a Vaiṣṇava 'history' of a deity in which a demon is incorporated into Vaiṣ-ṇava circles is that of Bali. It is crucial to note, however, that he is not regarded as a full incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Although Bali appears as a demon in the Epic and early Purāṇic literature, he is depicted as benevolent in the later Purāṇic texts (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). Here, the important concepts of sacrifice and initiation are reflected in Bali's self-sacrifice and single-minded devotion to Viṣṇu. In the case of Bali, the beheading motif is unnecessary because the demon Bali is transformed by his single-minded devotion to the Supreme God Viṣṇu. Bali attains his divine status only in the later Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* texts such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in which he serves as the model of a perfect devotee who sacrifices his desires to the will of Viṣṇu. Hospital, *The Righteous Demon*, pp. 20-24; 154ff.

The more complex view of myth as delineated above, from the perspective of the history of religions, leads us to take a somewhat more critical stance in respect of the structural approach, which focusses on the underlying structure of a myth. As discussed earlier, the structural approach is a valuable and legitimate methodology in the study of comparative mythology and the psychoanalytical interpretation of myth. However, no single approach by itself can be adequate in understanding the multifaceted nature of myth and its development over time. O'Flaherty herself acknowledges the benefits of pluralism in the study of myth, and the perspective of the history of religions should be seen as complementary to the structural approach. Nonetheless, it is evident that, because it fails to consider the textual context, and thus the relevance, of certain changes in a myth, the structural approach is less useful in the study of the history of religions. By ignoring the context of the various myths, the structural approach exaggerates mythic continuity and neglects the implications of discontinuities in the development of myth. The removal of myths from their textual context, as is done by the structuralists, causes them to miss the complexity of the many 'histories' of a mythical figure such as Hayagrīva.

The compilers-editors of the Purāṇas often made an attempt to incorporate deities, religious beliefs, and motifs into their own system. For contemporary scholars to remove a myth from its carefully constructed context is to imply that the compilers have blindly incorporated and agglomerated myths and/or elements of myths into their texts. This study of Hayagrīva would appear to support the position that this is not the case.

4. CONCLUSION

Because the references to, and myths about, Hayagrīva in the Epic and Purāṇic texts are disparate, one can only speak, in the plural, of the 'histories' of Hayagrīva. The Vedas contain stories about the beheading sacrifice of Yajña and Viṣṇu (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1-17; *Pañcaviṃśa Brahmana* 7.5.6), which may be regarded as an antecedent to the later Purāṇic stories explaining the origins of a horse-headed being. There are passages from one Śaiva and one Śākta Purāṇa that include the mythic strand of the beheading sacrifice as an explanation of the origin of Hayagrīva—*Skanda Purāṇa* 3-2.14-15 and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.5.1-112. However, neither of these passages includes the central Vaiṣṇava myth of Hayagrīva's benevolent act of recovering the Vedas from the demons;

that is, the horse-headed figures share the same lower ontological status as god (*deva*) and demon (*asura*), and should not be confused with the 'history' of the horse-headed God of gods (*devadeva*).

Important motifs and structural patterns are found in an Epic or Purāṇic myth. However, in order to understand the development of the Hindu tradition, its myths must be read and studied, to the extent that it is feasible, in their *religio-historical, sectarian* and *theological* contexts. The structural approach to Hindu mythology, although useful in discerning certain mythic patterns and cycles, (1) removes myths from their context, ignoring their possible multi-faceted development, (2) assumes antecedents back to the *Vedas*, which implies a purely linear understanding of mythic transformation, and neglects other variables, such as Āgamic influence on the development of a deity (which will be discussed in the following chapter), and, finally, (3) overlooks each text's theological or philosophical orientation and the editor's agenda.

More importantly, a pertinent question can be raised about the application of a research tool crafted for the study of pre-literate societies (as in Lévi-Strauss) to highly developed civilizations with a *literati*, such as we find in the case of India. Accordingly, the structural approach suffers from some inherent limitations when applied to literate self-conscious civilizations with highly developed philosophical and theological systems. In the latter, myth may be purposively adapted to serve the particular theological world-views of the different religious streams rather than simply evolve through some single, abstract historical process. Indeed, although Hinduism is founded on oral tradition and many of the early texts contain a residual orality, philosophical and theological systems have since evolved. As traditions become more literate and self-conscious, there is inevitably a shift from agglomeration typical of oral culture to that of selectivity (more evident in the later Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition). Because it is likely that the editors have not blindly incorporated the variants of myths into their texts, it would seem misleading to remove the myths from their contexts.

Given the context of a literate civilization, there is greater complexity to the myth of Hayagrīva, which is not reducible to a single unilinear or cyclical pattern. In Epic literature (*Mahābhārata*), there are references to a horse-headed figure that depict him as a demon (*hayagrīva*), a god, as well as a saviour of the Vedas (*haya-śiras; aśva-śiras*). Meanwhile, the *Harivaṃśa* contains only depictions of the horse-headed figure as a demon (*hayagrīva*) killed by Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, in the Purāṇas there are inconsistent depictions of the horse-headed figure: as a benevolent deity (*hayagrīva*)

who recovers the Vedas from the demons (such as *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 7.9.37); and as a malevolent demon (*hayagrīva*) who is killed by Viṣṇu (such as *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8.24.7-57, *Agni Purāṇa* 2.1-17). The Śākta Purāṇas (*Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.5.1-112 and *Kālika Purāṇa* 80) provide a synthesis of the two versions, whereby Hayagrīva is depicted both as benevolent and malevolent in a single story. It is important to note, however, that although the Śākta texts combine the benevolent and malevolent horse-headed figures, they do not include the central Vaiṣṇava myth describing Hayagrīva's role and act as *avatāra*.

The mythic account of Hayagrīva's benevolent act of recovering the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha is the beginning of Hayagrīva's Vaiṣṇava history as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. The Vaiṣṇava *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, because it has an *advaitic* orientation, is able to relate both the benevolent and malevolent (unsynthesized) stories of Hayagrīva separately. For non-*advaitic* Vaiṣṇava texts (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*), Hayagrīva is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu and thus can only be benevolent in nature. Here we encounter a text that is primarily theological, wherein myth is adapted to a larger theological world-view! Not unexpectedly, with its Vaiṣṇava theological orientation, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* contains only the benevolent depiction of Hayagrīva, without mention of Viṣṇu's beheading sacrifice. The wholly benevolent nature of Viṣṇu's *avatāra* must be presented without a trace of impurity!

Although the *avatāric* listings and the myth of Hayagrīva's recovery of the Vedas in the Epic and Purāṇic literature shed some light on the 'histories' of Hayagrīva, there are other significant features of Hayagrīva that deserve attention even though they are not regarded as important in the predominantly mythic genre of literature. These features pertain to the various explicit descriptions of Hayagrīva in the Āgamic corpus, which form the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN HINDU SECTARIAN TRADITIONS: TEMPLE RITUALS REGARDING HAYAGRĪVA IN THE ĀGAMAS

Although Vedic *yajña* is considered the origin of Hindu ritual and has often been used to legitimize later ritual developments, temple rituals are actually based on the Āgamas and the encyclopedic Purāṇas. The Āgamas are foundational to Hindu temple ritual in Kashmir and the South, whereas the Purāṇas are the basis of temple worship in the North. Thus, in tracing the development of a deity, an analysis of the Āgamic stream, a part of the pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition, is not only useful but essential. The Āgamas provide prescriptive information regarding Hindu religious practice, including the worship of particular deities. These texts, which prescribe the iconography of deities as well as the specifics of many temple rituals such as image worship, are central to Hinduism and thus a necessary source in tracing the 'histories' of Hayagrīva.

Although some of the information that the Āgamas contain is included in the encyclopedic Purāṇas (see below), the Āgamas provide additional descriptions of deities that are not included in the Purāṇas. Both the Āgamas and the encyclopedic Purāṇas shed light on the dynamic relations between mythology and iconography as well as the interaction between pan-Indian 'mainstream' Hinduism and the pan-Indian sectarian Āgamic traditions.

The three divisions of the Āgamic traditions correspond to the three major Hindu sects: the Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Śākta. These three sects acknowledge the supremacy of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Śakti, respectively. Because the Āgamas are clearly sectarian, an analysis of texts from the three groups may well demonstrate the interrelations and possible convergence among the sectarian traditions.

This chapter begins with an overview and analysis of the many Pāñcarātra Āgamic references to Hayagrīva, including an examination of the theological and temple ritual status of the deity, and his *devatā*, mantraic and *yantraic* forms. This is followed by a comparative study of these Pāñcarātra Āgamic depictions of Hayagrīva with those contained in the encyclopedic Puranas. Lastly, the chapter considers the references to, and depictions of, Hayagrīva (or lack of them) in the Śaiva and Śākta

Āgamic (Tantric) traditions. An analysis of the various references to Hayagrīva contained in the sectarian Āgamas reflects the complexity in the development of the notion of a deity and the interchange among, or common source of, many of the motifs and emblems in the various Indian sectarian traditions. The similarities raise the important issue of the role and influence that indigenous beliefs and practices might have had on both the Āgamas and wider Hinduism.

1. Overview of the References to Hayagrīva in the Āgamas, with Special Reference to Pāñcarātra

1.1. *Pāñcarātra Āgamas and the References to Hayagrīva*

Even though the Āgamas are today mainly found in Kashmir and the South, the term pan-Indian here qualifies the Āgamic texts as not being restricted to a single region. I regard the Āgamic traditions to be relatively old. Scholars have commonly dated the earliest Pāñcarātra Āgamic texts ca. 500 C.E., but the texts (or at least portions of the texts) were likely part of a more ancient oral tradition that only later came to be written down in the form of *saṃhitās*. According to Jan Gonda, the most ancient Pāñcarātra Āgamas' dates are ca. 600-850 C.E.[1] More recently, Alexis Sanderson has demonstrated that the extant Pāñcarātra Āgamas seem to be of a much later date than previously believed based on the fact that they appear to have been written under the influence of the Tantric Śaiva models. Accordingly, the most ancient texts, the *Jayākhya Saṃhitā*, the *Sātvata Saṃhitā* and the *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā*, are believed to have been composed at the earliest ca. 850 C.E.[2] The dating of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas is very problematic because there are no extant commentaries. The Āgamas have been transmitted primarily through the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, making it difficult to discern which texts originated outside South India (i.e., Kashmir, Orissa) and to

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[1] Jan Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), p. 56.

[2] Alexis Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", in *Les Sources et Le Temps*, edited by F. Grimal (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2001), pp. 1-47, especially pp. 38-39, especially note 50.

date the early Pāñcarātra corpus.[3] As a consequence the texts can only be tentatively placed in a relative chronological order.[4]

According to Gonda, although the Āgamas tend to have a ritualistic outlook—involving a preoccupation with the Lord's ornaments, construction of temples, installation of images, temple worship, ceremonial bathing, and public festivals—they are also concerned with cosmogonic and salvific matters, such as creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe, speculations on the nature of the Absolute, the creative nature of sound, and the use of mantras.[5]

The Pāñcarātra Āgamas are believed to have been revealed by Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) Himself. The most ancient and therefore authoritative of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas are the *Jayākhya Saṃhitā*, the *Sātvata Saṃhitā* and the *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā*, referred to collectively as the *ratna-traya* (the triad of gems). Because the Pāñcarātra Āgamas describe three forms of a deity—*devatā* (personifying), *yantra* (symbolic) and mantra (sonic)—their references to Hayagrīva can be analysed from the viewpoint of theology, ritual, and iconography. They contain some interesting adaptations and variations with regard to Hayagrīva's role, status and nature.

1.1.1. *Theological Status*

The post-Epic Vaiṣṇava texts (such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the Pāñcarātra Āgamas) give a more extensive listing of the number of *avatāras* than the 'traditional ten' referred to by many Indian and Western scholars. On the basis of the *avatāric* listing found in *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* (see below), Gonda claims that there are four *vyūhas*, 'cosmic emanations of Viṣṇu' (Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha), and thirty-nine

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[3] Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, pp. 51-56. Alexis Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", pp. 1-47.

[4] Mitsunori Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology, with a Translation and Critical Notes from Chapters on Theology in the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), pp. 15-49. The work of Matsuba is the most recent thorough study of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas available that provides a relative chronology for the texts.

[5] Teun Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature*, vol. III, facs. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), p. 8. Here, Āgamas are referred to as Tantras.

Although presently Pāñcarātrins do not consider Pāñcarātra as Tantric, most likely due to the generally negative attitude to, and disrespect for, some of the Tantric practices, the word Tantra is sometimes used interchangeably with Āgama. See, for example, Pandit M. Duraiswamy Aiyangar and Pandit T. Venugopalacharya (eds.), *Śrī Pāñcarātrarakṣā of Vedānta Deśika* (Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1967), pp. vii-xii.

vibhava-avatāras (incarnations of Viṣṇu on earth at particular places and times) according to Pāñcarātra.[6]

In a more comprehensive study, Desai finds that the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās are inconsistent in their various lists because they attribute three or four emanations to each of the principal *vyūhas*.[7] Moreover, the Āgamic texts acknowledge twenty-four standing forms of Viṣṇu, which are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*'s list of *The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu* and are said to symbolize Viṣṇu's different visible forms.[8]

Just as there are variant listings of *avatāras*, so also there is ambiguity as to the status of Hayagrīva in the Āgamic lists of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. According to the Āgamic corpus, the major (*mukhya*) and minor (*gauṇa*) *avatāric* forms have different theological statuses based on the fact that the *mukhya* forms are closer derivatives from the four-fold aggregate of cosmic emanations (*vyūha-avatāra*). The Pāñcarātra Āgamas contain inconsistencies as to Hayagrīva's status as a *mukhya* (major) or *gauṇa* (minor) form of Viṣṇu.

The *Sātvata Saṃhitā* (ca. 500-850 C.E.),[9] one of the three most ancient and authoritative of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, provides a list of the *vibhava-avatāric* forms of the Supreme God—human, animal or combined incarnations on earth at specific times and places. *Sātvata Saṃhitā* 9.77-84 (*Vibhavadevatāntartanagavidhi*, 'Rules for the silent worship of *vibhava-devatā* forms') lists thirty-eight *avatāras*. The list includes the popular ten incarnations (Matsya, Varāha, Kūrma, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Kalkin) along with lesser known incarnations (such

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[6] Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivism: A Comparison* (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), pp. 54-56. For a discussion on meditation and the manifestations of the Supreme in Pāñcarātra, see Sanjukta Gupta, "Yoga and Antaryāga in Pāñcarātra" in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honour of André Padoux*, edited by Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp.183-208.

[7] Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu*, pp. 3-10.

[8] *Mahābhārata, Anuśāsanika Parvan* 149.

[9] Matsubara ca. 500 C.E. (1994, pp. 17-49), Gonda ca. 600-850 C.E. (1977, p. 56). According to Sanderson, the text's dates are much later, ca. 850 C.E. See Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", pp. 38-39.

Sātvata-saṃhitā (edited by Vrajavallabhadvivedaḥ) (Vārāṇasī: Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Trivari, 1982). The *Sātvata Saṃhitā* is considered to be one of the oldest Pāñcarātra texts. Seventy-five percent of the text pertains to *mantra*. The text is concerned with the various *vyūhas*, and *vibhava avatāric* forms of the one God. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 514-536. Goudriaan and Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature*, p. 108.

as Hayagrīva) and secondary incarnations who are sages that have come to be considered partial incarnations (such as Kapila, Vyāsa):

1. Padma-nābha (lotus-navelled one)
2. Dhruva (illuminous one)
3. Ananta (form of the Śeṣa-serpent)
4. Śaktyātmā (soul with *śakti* power)[10]
5. Madhusūdana (slayer of *Madhu*)[11]
6. Vidyādhideva (god of Vedic learning)
7. Kapila (teacher of Saṃkhya philosophy)
8. Viśvarūpa (all-pervasive form)
9. Vihaṅgama[12] (goose)
10. Krodātmā (soul of the [inner] cavity)
11. Baḍabāvaktra (mare-faced one)
12. Dharma (personification of conduct)
13. Vāgīśvara (lord of speech)
14. Ekarṇavaśāyin (one who reclines on the [Milk] Ocean)
15. Kamaṭheśvara (tortoise)
16. Varāha (boar)
17. Narasiṃha (man-lion)
18. Amṛtaharaṇa (bestower of nectar)
19. Śrīpati (consort of Lakṣmī)
20. Kāntātmā (beloved One)
21. Rāhujit (conqueror of [demon] Rāhu)
22. Kālanemigha (destroyer of ignorance)
23. Pārijātahara (bearer of the *pārijāta* flower)
24. Lokanātha (Lord of the worlds, Buddha)
25. Dattātreya (form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva)
26. Nyagrodhaśāyi (one who reclines on the banyan leaf)
27. Matsya (fish)
28. Vāmanadeha (dwarf)
29. Trivikrama (He who took three strides [across the worlds])
30. Nara (Arjuna)

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[10] According to S. K. Ramachandra Rao, Śaktyātmā has four faces—Hayagrīva, Narasiṃ-ha, Varāha, and Kapila. Rao, *Āgama-kosha Vol. IV Pāñcarātrāgama*, p. 114.

[11] Madhusūdana is the form of Viṣṇu which killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Thus, this form is related to the Hayagrīva myth.

[12] Vihaṅgama literally means 'moving in the sky, flying, or a female bird'. The Sanskrit word *vihaṅgama,* used interchangeably with *haṃsa*, is most commonly translated as 'swan'. However, as demonstrated by Vogel, *haṃsa* should be translated as 'goose'. On the importance of the goose in Indian literature, see Jean Phillipe Vogel, *The Goose in Indian Literature and Art* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962). For a discussion of the significance of the goose with regards to Hayagrīva, see Chapters Five (note 38) and Eight (pp. 197-198).

31. Nārāyaṇa
32. Hari
33. Kṛṣṇa
34. Paraśurāma (Rāma with the axe)
35. Śrī Rāma
36. Vedavid (knower of the Vedas)
37. Kalkin
38. Pātālaśayana (one who reclines in the nether world)

It is noteworthy that the list includes *baḍabā-vaktra*, that is, *baḍabā* (or *vaḍabā*) which means 'female horse, mare', compounded with 'face' (*vaktra*); in other words, 'the one with a mare's face'. Although this form might appear to refer to Hayagrīva, according to secondary sources (Schrader, Matsubara, and Rao) it does not refer to Hayagrīva. Rather, the thirteenth *avatāra* listed above, *vāgīśvara*, refers to Hayagrīva.[13] *Sātvata Saṃhitā* 12.59 explicitly connects *vāgīśvara* with Hayagrīva (*vāji-vaktra*), which is also the role attributed to him in the later Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition as the Lord of Speech (see Chapter Six). Meanwhile, *baḍabā-vaktra* is referred to in *Mahābhārata* 12.329.48 but not in connection with the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. Although according to secondary sources the name *vāgīśvara* refers to Hayagrīva, the name does not describe Hayagrīva's main physical feature, that of having a horse-head. This may reflect the fact that in the Āgamic texts there are two separate images that eventually fused in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, where Hayagrīva came to be associated with speech. It may also well be that these texts reflect the splitting of an earlier single figure, in which one part takes on the status of the icon and the other takes on the mantraic form of Hayagrīva.

Similarly, both *baḍabā-vaktra* and *vāgīśvara* are found in chapter five of the *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* (ca. 600 C.E.)[14]—*Suddhasṛṣṭivarṇana*

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[13] Otto F. Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* (Madras: Adyar Library, 1916), p. 46; Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, p. 208; Rao, *Āgama-kosha Vol. IV Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 116-117.

Although Srinivasa Chari reviews the list and discusses Hayagrīva, he does not specify as to whether or not Hayagrīva is *baḍabā-vaktra* or *vāgīśvara*. Srinivasa S.M. Chari, *Vaiṣṇavism: Its Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Discipline* (1st ed; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 219.

[14] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 17-49. According to Schrader, the *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*'s dates are ca. 700 C.E. Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*, p. 19. In contrast, Sanderson argues that the text's dates are much later, ca. 1100 C.E. See Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", p. 35.

Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā of the Pāñcarātrāgama, Vols I-II (edited by Pandit M.D.

('Description of Pure Creation')—which describes the *vyūha* doctrine and lists thirty-nine *vibhavic* forms of Viṣṇu (*Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* 5.50-56). The only difference between the list of *Sātvata Saṃhitā* and *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* is that the latter has the additional form of Śāntātmā (Tranquil Soul).

The thirteenth chapter of *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* (ca. 800-1200 C.E)[15] also discusses the *vyūha* doctrine, followed by a list of only thirty-six *avatāras*. The list excludes Kapila, Dattātreya and Paraśurāma, but includes both *baḍabā-vaktra* and *vāgīśvara*. *Lakṣmī Tantra* (ca.1100-1200 C.E.)[16] chapter ten—*Para-vyūha-prakāśa* ('Manifestation of the Supreme [*para*] and cosmic emanations [*vyūha*]')—explains the *vyūha* doctrine. The subsequent chapter eleven—*Vibhava-prakāśa* ('Manifestation of *Vibhava* Forms') provides an extensive list of thirty-nine *avatāric* forms. This list is identical to the list found in *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*.

Rāmānujāchārya and Revised by Pandit V. Krishnamāchārya) (Madras: Adyar Library & Research Centre, 1966). The *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* is the best known Pāñcarātra Āgama, due to Schrader's study. The *saṃhitā* is primarily concerned with the theoretical part of the Pāñcarātra system. The latter part is concerned with the questions Nārada asks of Ahirbudhnya (Śiva). Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 43-65.

The *vyūha* theory posits that the six qualities of Vāsudeva are to form the three *vyūhas* (Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha), and out of the three *vyūhas* emanate twelve *vyūhantaras*. This theory is a characteristic of Pāñcarātra doctrine.

[15] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 34-35.

Viṣvaksena-saṃhitā (critically edited by Lakshmi Narasimha Bhatta) (Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1972). The central focus of *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* is temple rituals (like icon worship) and festivals. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 395-416.

[16] Sanjukta Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra: A Pāñcarātra Text* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), p. xxxvii. Sanderson argues the text's date is post- Kṣemaraja who flourished ca. 1000-1050 C.E. In contrast, according to Matsubara, the *Lakṣmī Tantra*'s date is ca. 800 C.E. See Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", pp. 35-36. Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 17-49.

Lakṣmī-tantra: A Pāñcarātra Āgama (edited with Sanskrit gloss and introduction by Pandit V. Krishnamāchārya) (Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1959). The *Lakṣmī Tantra* is a unique *saṃhitā* in that it is the only text that is exclusively devoted to Lakṣmī. Furthermore, the *saṃhitā* is concerned with *jñāna*, while it only provides a scant treatment of *kriyā*—the practical concerns of the Āgamas—like icon building and so forth. It deals with esoteric matters like mantras. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 345-364.

From *para-vyūha* emanates Saṃkarṣaṇa, from Saṃkarṣaṇa emanates Pradhyumna, and from Pradhyumna emanates Aniruddha. *Lakṣmī-tantra* 11.19-25.

It is important to note that, although the Āgamas (such as *Sātvata Saṃhitā* and *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*) provide lists of *vibhava-avatāras*, the forms are not all necessarily primary *avatāric* forms; that is, the lists include figures like Kapila and Vyāsa who clearly are secondary incarnations. This makes the status of Hayagrīva somewhat ambiguous.

Unlike the *avatāric* lists contained in *Sātvata*, *Ahirbudhnya* and *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitās* and *Lakṣmī Tantra*, there is no similar list found in the *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* (ca. 800-1200 C.E.?).[17] Even though the *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* begins with the explanation of the great deeds performed by Hayagrīva as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the text nevertheless depicts him as a minor incarnation. Chapter twenty-three of the *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* lists the iconic forms for the ten *avatāras* and chapter twenty-four describes the nine *vyūhas*; neither passage mentions Hayagrīva. It is only in the following chapter (25.16-25) that Hayagrīva (called *haya-śīrṣa*) appears in an iconic list of other miscellaneous forms of the Lord, including Viśvarūpa, Harṣaṅkara and Jalaśāyi. The names *baḍabā-vaktra* and *vāgīśvara* are not included in these lists.

The ambiguity of Hayagrīva's status in the *avatāric* listings of Viṣṇu found in the Āgamas is accentuated by the inconsistency in their depiction of him both as a *mukhya* (a primary form that is a direct emanation from Viṣṇu himself) and as a *gauṇa* (a secondary form, i.e., a soul in bondage which is pervaded by the power of Viṣṇu for a particular function). According to *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* 8.51 and *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*, the *mukhya avatāras* should be approached when seeking *mokṣa*, whereas the *gauṇa avatāras* should be worshipped only for mundane fruits.[18] *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* and *Padma Saṃhitā* hold that Hayagrīva is not a direct emanation from Aniruddha and thus is considered a *gauṇa avatāra*. According to the *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*, all *avatāras* are said to emanate from the *vyūha* Aniruddha. *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* describes Hayagrīva as

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[17] The *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* makes mention of Kashmir and the *nāgarī* cript, suggesting a Northern origin. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 55.

Hayaśīrṣa Pāñcarātram, Vol. II Adikanda (edited by Bhuban Mohan Saṅkhyatīrtha) (Rajshahi [East Pakistan]: Varendra Research Society, 1956). The *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* is concerned with the building of temples, the construction of icons and their sanctification. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 537-550.

The ten *avatāras* are: Matsya, Kūrma, two types of Varāha, Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana, Jamadagnya, Rāma, Balarāma, Buddha, Kalkin. The nine *vyūhas* listed are: Ādimūrti Vāsudeva, Vāsudeva, Baladeva (Saṃkarṣaṇa), Pradyumna accompanied by His wife, Aniruddha, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, Nṛsiṃha, Varāha.

[18] Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*, pp. 47-48; Chari, *Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 218.

emanating from Aniruddha through the fish (*matsya*) which directly comes from Kṛṣṇa.[19] Therefore, according to *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*, Hayagriva is an indirect emanation of a *vyūha*. This is an important reference because the *Mahābhārata* also refers to Hayagrīva as being an emanation of Aniruddha, which shows that ancient beliefs and practices are contained in both the predominantly mythological texts (Epics and Purāṇas) and the sectarian ritual ones (Āgamas). Likewise, *Padma Saṃhitā* (ca. 800-1200 C.E.)[20] claims that the ten *vibhava-avatāras* are derived from one of the four *vyūhas* (1.2.31-36), and the remaining *vibhava-avatāras* are emanations from those ten. This makes Hayagrīva an emanation from a primary *vibhava*, and thus only indirectly an emanation of Aniruddha. By way of contrast, *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* (ca. 1300-1500 C.E.)[21] and *Padma Saṃhitā* 2.35a describe Hayagrīva as a direct emanation from Saṃkarṣaṇa (4.26).

Thus, we see radical inconsistencies in the depictions of Hayagrīva's status in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas: the texts describe Hayagrīva as either an emanation from Saṃkarṣaṇa, whose qualities are knowledge (*jñāna*) and strength (*bala*) (*Viśvāmitra, Padma*), or from Aniruddha whose qualities are creative energy (*śakti*) and splendour (*tejas*) (*Viṣvaksena*). Furthermore,

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[19] Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*, pp. 47-8; Rao, *Āgama-kosha Vol IV, Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp.123-125.

[20] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 32-5. According to Gonda, the *Padma Saṃhitā*'s date is before 1400 C.E. given the fact that it is cited by Vedānta Deśika (ca. 1268-1371 C.E.). Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 100.

Padma Saṃhitā (Part 1) (Madras: Pāñcarātra Parisodhana Pariṣad, 1974). The *Padma Saṃhitā* is the primary text used in Śrī Raṅgam and Mysore for the formal training of the Pāñcarātra *arcakas*. It provides guidelines for worship. According to the *saṃhitā*, the grace of God is granted only to those who observe their appropriate *jātī* and *āśrama*. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 197-242.

Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha are emanations from Vāsudeva. Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana, Śrī Rāma, and Paraśurāma are emanations from Saṃkarṣaṇa. Balarāma is an emanation from Pradyumna. Kṛṣṇa and Kalkin are emanations from Aniruddha.

[21] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 33-35. According to Gonda, the *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* is a later *saṃhitā* (post-Rāmānuja [11th-12th century C.E.]) because it is not cited during the early period. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, pp. 100-101.

Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā (critically edited by Undemane Shankara Bhatta) (Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1970). The *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* is a condensed version of the wisdom Nārāyaṇa taught Brahmā. The topics are varied, and include discussions on wisdom, and prescriptions for the initiation ritual, mantra-lore, construction/consecration of temples/icons, as well as temple ritual and festivals. The text is not known to have been used as a guide for temple construction and liturgy by any Śrīvaiṣṇava temple. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 365-382.

although Hayagrīva is depicted as a major (*mukhya*) form of Viṣṇu in the detailed story of his activities as *vibhava-avatāra* (*Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*), he is depicted as a *vibhava-avatāra* of secondary status in other texts (*Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā, Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*).

Several descriptions of Hayagrīva contained in the Āgamas are concerned with the practice of meditation and the use of the circular diagram (*maṇḍala*), the symbolic diagram (*yantra*), and/or the key mantra of a deity (*bīja-mantra*). *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* 24.35b (ca. 500-850 C.E.)[22] describes Hayagrīva as being all-pervasive. This is significant as it alludes to Hayagrīva's Supremacy. Furthermore, the sections on mantra and *yantra* are believed to be the oldest in the Āgamic literature, and are thought to represent a very ancient tradition.[23] *Śeṣa Saṃhitā* 40.17 (ca. 1200 C.E.?),[24] too, is concerned with the description of the Hayagrīva mantra and *yantra* design. The text reads: "O Highest Being, the god who has the neck of a horse [and is] in the form of consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*) has a body decorated by full splendour/light". In *Īśvara Saṃhitā* 24.244-256 (ca.1300 C.E.),[25] Nārada teaches the sages that wisdom (*dhyāna*) is the goal

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[22] Matsubara ca. 500 C.E. (1994, pp. 17-49), Gonda ca. 600-850 C.E. (1977, p. 56). According to Sanderson, the text's dates are much later, ca. 850 C.E. See Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñcarātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", pp. 38-39.

Pauṣkarasaṃhitā: One of Three Gems in Pāñcarātra (edited by Sree Yatiraya Sampathkumara Ramanuja of Melkote) (Bangalore: A Srinivasa Aiyanger and M.C. Thirumalachariar, 1934). The *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* is the most famous and ancient Pāñcarātra text primarily concerned with the esoteric meanings of *maṇḍalas* as well as the consecration of the icons. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 277-284.

[23] Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*, pp. 16-19.

[24] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 27,35. According to Gonda, the *Śeṣa Saṃhitā* is comparatively a recent text, composed when *Pāñcarātra* was equated with *pañca-saṃskāra*. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 104.

Śeṣa Saṃhitā, edited by L. Śrīnivāsācārya (Mysore: Mysore Dharmasaṃsthā, 1935). The *Śeṣa Saṃhitā* is most likely a later Pāñcarātra text. The text is solely concerned with mantra. All the mantras are considered to be Vedic and the text refers to itself in chapter 2 as the 'fifth Veda'. According to Smith, it lacks the typical scope of a Saṃhitā text. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 435-447. See *Śeṣa Saṃhitā* 22.22-23 on the *bīja-mantra* of Viṣṇu's various forms.

[25] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 27-35. According to Gonda, the text's dates are ca. 1050 C.E. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 93.

Īśvarasaṃhitā-Śrīpāñcarātra (Conjeevaram: Sudarśana Press, 1923). *Īśvara Saṃhitā* is a popular reference manual. Its origin is believed to have been in South India, for it contains descriptions of local temple rituals. It is divided into three parts: (1) *nitya*, concerned with

of the uttering of mantras to various images (*mūrtis*) of god, including *vāji-vaktra* (the horse-headed one). Finally, in *Parāśara Saṃhitā* 28.6-23 (ca. 1200-1500 C.E.),[26] there are discussions of the Hayagrīva mantras, wherein Hayagrīva is described as the supreme horse-headed one, situated in the middle of the full moon, bearing the *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, and the book of wisdom (*jñāna-pustaka*).

Lastly, there are several descriptions of the icon of Hayagrīva that are located in the lists of other minor and auxiliary deities. This aspect tends to further underline the ambiguity in Hayagrīva's theological status in the Āgamas.

1.1.2. *The Ritual Status of Hayagrīva in the Temple*

On the basis of temple architecture, Krishna H. Shastri recognizes ten popular forms of Viṣṇu—five of primary importance, commonly represented for worship in the Inner Sanctum, with the remaining five being representations most often found on the surrounding walls and pillars. Still other forms of Viṣṇu include the reclining Viṣṇu (Anantaśāyin), Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu, and the twenty-four forms that represent Viṣṇu in standing form.[27]

Although there is ambiguity about Hayagrīva's theological status in the *avatāric* listings, the Saṃhitās are considerably more consistent on his temple *ritual status*. The texts describe the horse-headed god as an auxiliary deity. *Padma Saṃhitā* 22 consists of rules for the attendant deities (*parivāra-devatā*) and includes Hayagrīva (v. 2b-8a) in the list of minor gods, several of whom belong to the Śaiva complex: Soma, Gajānana, Ṣaṇmukha, Kāma, Dhanada, Rudra, Brahmā, Vināyaka and so forth. *Padma Saṃhitā* 10.100-104 also includes Hayagrīva in a list of auxiliary

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daily rituals of worship, (2) *naimittika*, concerned with the special festivals throughout the liturgical calender, and (3) *kāmya*, concerned with the ritual pertaining to the icon. It is popularily considered to be the derivative of the *Sātvata Saṃhitā*. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 66-92.

[26] The *Parāśara Saṃhitā* is difficult to date. According to Gonda, the text's date is after the 12th century and before the 15th century. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 105.

Parāśara Saṃhitā., edited by K.K. Raghavacharya (Bangalore: Vāgīśvarī Press, 1898). *Parāśara Saṃhitā* belongs to the late period of *saṃhitā* literature. The text is primarily concerned with mantras (composition and application), as well as the installation of icons. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 188-196.

[27] Shastri, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, pp. 22-55.

deities such as Sūrya and Candra. *Nāradīya Saṃhitā* 14.106 (ca. 800-1200
C.E.)[28] depicts Hayagrīva as a *vimāna-devatā* (a deity placed on the temple
tower [*gopuram*]) along with deities such as Śrīdhara, Viśeṣa, Śrī Hari, and
Varāha.[29] Likewise, *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* 21.68-69 describes Hayagrīva as
a *vimāna-devatā* in a list which includes both primary *vibhava-avatāras*
(Varāha, Narasiṃha) and secondary forms (Śrīdhara). Finally, Hayagriva
(*haya-vaktra*), along with Śrīdhara, is described as a doorkeeper (*dvāra-
pālaka*) in *Nāradīya Saṃhitā* 15.226.

Interestingly, although the Āgamas describe Hayagrīva as different types
of auxiliary deities (i.e., *vimāna-devatā*, *parivāra-devatā*, *dvāra-pālaka*),
the texts are in general agreement concerning the placement of Hayagrīva
shrines in the temple; that is, they agree regarding his *ritual status*. For
instance, *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* 17.37 prescribes that the seat for Hayagrīva
be in the north for the purpose of *pūjā*. Similarly, in *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* 21,
the prescription for the location of the presiding deities in the temple,
wherein Nārāyaṇa is the main icon, includes Hayagrīva (*haya-vaktra*) who
should be placed facing the northern direction (21.68-69); *Sanatkumāra
Saṃhitā* 4.24 (ca. 800 C.E.) also refers to Hayagrīva as an attendant deity
which should be placed only in the northern side of the temple.[30] Likewise,
Nāradīya Saṃhitā 14.106 prescribes the north as the seat for Hayagrīva,
who is one of the *vimāna-devatās*. *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* 13 prescribes the

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[28] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 27-35.
Nāradīya Saṃhitā, edited by Rāghava Prasāda Chaudhary (Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit
Vidyapeetha, 1971). The *Nāradīya Saṃhitā* is typical in that its primary concern is worship,
including the different modes of worship, festivals, locus of worship and the necessary
paraphernalia. Uniquely, the text contains several chapters on the *phala* (fruit/boons)
received and used in worship. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the
Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 147-165.

[29] *Vimāna* means 'measuring out, traversing, or extension' and is derived from the San-
skrit verb root *vi+ma* 'to measure, meter out, or pass over'. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-
English Dictionary*, p. 980. In the context of shrines in a temple, the term *vimāna-devatā*
refers to images which are extensions or vehicles of the presiding deity; that is, they are not
central, but are attendant deities of the main temple icon.

[30] Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 21, 26-27, 34.
Sanatkumāra-Saṃhitā of the Pāñcarātrāgama Vol. 95 (edited by Pandit V.
Krishnamāchārya) (Madras: Adyar Library & Research Center, 1969). The *Sanatkumāra
Saṃhitā* is one of the older Pāñcarātra texts. It is quoted in Yāmuna's *Āgama Prāmāṇya* (c.
10th century C.E.). It is in the form of a monologue narrated by Sanatkumāra, who tells of
the knowledge he has learnt from Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and some ancient sages. The text
covers a variety of unrelated topics, including mantra, *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas*, *prasāda*, *dīkṣā-
yoga* and so forth. Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the
Pāñcarātrāgama*, pp. 494-513.

correct location of the various minor deities, and it places Hayagrīva in the north. Finally, *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* 14 prescribes the placement of Hayagrīva in the northeast in a sub-shrine of the main shrine housing Vāsudeva (the other sub-shrines are to contain Vāmana in the southeast, Narasiṃha in the southwest, and Varāha in the northwest). The Āgamas are thus significantly more consistent in relation to the proper placement of Hayagrīva's icon in the northern area of the temple than they are on the theological question as to his status as a form of Viṣṇu.

1.1.3. *Iconographical Depictions*

There are many iconographical prescriptions concerning Hayagrīva in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. The general listings of the different icons of Viṣṇu or his attendants often contain detailed descriptions of Hayagrīva. Once again, these specific references to Hayagrīva are inconsistent regarding such things as the number of his arms (four or eight), and the emblems that he carries in his hands. Although in every text consulted Hayagrīva is depicted as bearing the conch shell (*śaṅkha*) and the discus (*cakra*), there are several other emblems that he may or may not carry in his other hands, depending on the text. They are: the mace (*gaḍa*), the lotus (*padma*), the book (*pustaka*), and the rosary beads (*akṣa-sūtra*). Some texts also describe him as having one hand in the specific position (*mudrā*) representing wisdom. Although the carrying of the book (sometimes specified as the book of wisdom) is a common Āgamic depiction of Hayagrīva, the references to Hayagrīva bearing a book of wisdom do not explicitly say whether the book represents the Vedas, the Āgamas, or is simply a more general symbol of wisdom.

According to *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* 24.356, Hayagrīva should be depicted as having a horse's face and a human body. He may have two or four arms, or at times may be depicted even with eight or twelve arms. He bears the same emblems as Visnu; additionally, however, he is often depicted as bearing the rosary (*akṣa-mālā*) and the book (*pustaka*). These two emblems appear to reflect his *vibhava-avatāric* act of recovering the Vedas and his role as bestower of wisdom.

In its discussion of the various incarnations of Viṣṇu, *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* 3.58-62a describes Hayagrīva as bearing several of the items associated with Viṣṇu: "The horse-headed one has four arms [bearing] the conch shell (*śaṅkha*), the discus (*cakra*), the mace (*gaḍa*) and the lotus (*padma*)". By way of contrast, in *Padma Saṃhitā* 22.2-7, which is concerned with the rules regarding the forms of the attendant deities,

Hayagrīva (*aśva-vaktra*) is described as having four arms. Of the lower hands, close to his hip, one bears the *śaṅkha* while the other assumes the *varada-mudrā* (hand position of boon bestowal), whereas his two upper hands carry the book of wisdom (*vijñāna-pustaka*) and a string of rosary beads (*akṣa-sūtra*). A mace (*gaḍa*) is said to rest on his thigh. Hayagrīva is also described as being composed of crystal-like nectar. In *Śeṣa Saṃhitā* 40.7, Hayagrīva—as a *bīja-mantra*—is described as "the All-pervasive One (*vibhu*) and the Bestower of wisdom (*vidyā-pradāyaka*) who bears in his hands the conch shell (*śaṅkha*), and a discus (*cakra*)".

Parāśara Saṃhitā 27.6-23, too, contains various depictions of Hayagrīva in the context of prescriptive salutations to the deity: Hayagrīva is depicted as holding a discus (*cakra*) and lotus (*padma*); he is to be accompanied by both Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī (v. 6). Verse 10 is a salutation to the Hayagrīva deity who wears a crown, holds the conch shell (*śaṅkha*), discus (*cakra*), mace (*gaḍa*), lotus (*padma*), and book of wisdom (*jñāna-pustaka*). Then, in verse 14, Hayagrīva is praised as one who bears the *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, *jñāna-pustaka*, *pāśa* (noose, rope) and *aṅkuśa* (staff). Lastly, in verses 22-23, Hayagrīva is worshipped as one who carries a *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, *jñāna-pustaka*, *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, and *agni-vajra* (fire-bolt).

Although the name *baḍabā-vaktra* could conceivably refer to Hayagrīva, according to secondary sources *baḍabā-vaktra* refers to a human body with a mare's head that wears a crown, but is said not to be Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva.[31] However, in *Parāśara Saṃhitā*, the description of the deity with a horse-head who is called *baḍabā-vaktra* is identical to the description of Hayagrīva wherein he is praised as one who bears the *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, *pustaka*, *pāśa* and *aṅkuśa* (27.18), and is worshipped as one who carries a *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, *pāśa*, *agni-vajra*, *aṅkuśa*, and *pustaka* (27.22-23).[32]

Lastly, *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* 20.2.24-26 describes an icon of the Lord that is horse-faced (*vāji-vaktra*). According to this Āgama, Hayagrīva should have four arms that bear the *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa* and *pustaka*. Furthermore,

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[31] Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*, p. 46; Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, p. 208; Rao, *Āgama-kosha Vol. IV Pāñcarātrāgama* , p. 116.

[32] The latter two descriptions of the horse-headed deity, in the *Parāśara Saṃhitā*, include the staff, arrow and bow and have Him wearing a crown, which are features—although not commonly contained in the depictions of Viṣṇu-Hayagrīva—that are found in some of the various Buddhist depictions of the horse-headed deity associated with Avalokiteśvara. van Gulik, *Hayagrīva*, pp. 29-38.

the deity should be seated on a blue lotus and accompanied by his consort Lakṣmī. His left foot rests on the serpent Śeṣa (*śeṣa-nāga*) and his right foot on a tortoise. Interestingly, this unusual depiction is similar to the passage in the *Agni Purāṇa* 49.26 (see 'Overview of the Iconographical References of Hayagrīva in the Purāṇas' below).

1.1.4. *Myth and Hayagrīva's Recovery of the Vedas*

Regarding the mythic dimension of the Āgamas, the *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* (ca. 800 C.E.), the Saṃhitā that bears the name of the horse-headed god, begins with the story about Hayagrīva and his glorious act of saving the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.[33] This story is similar to the one told in *Mahābhārata* 12.335.1-64. In the first chapter of *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*, Mārkaṇḍeya asks Bhṛgu as to why Viṣṇu has a horse's head (1.1). Bhṛgu relates how Śiva and Gaurī asked Brahmā to tell them about the teachings revealed to Brahmā by Hayagrīva. Then Brahmā tells them how, when the Lord was in his *yoga-nidrā* (yogic-sleep), a beam of light emitted from his navel and became a thousand-petaled lotus. Brahmā himself appeared from this lotus and, when he was chanting the Vedas, he shed two drops of sweat that dropped on the Lord. These two drops became the two *asuras*—Madhu and Kaiṭabha—who then stole the Vedas from Brahmā. Upon learning of this, the Lord awoke from his sleep, took the form of the horse-headed god (*haya-śīrṣa*), went to the nether world, recovered the Vedas and returned them to Brahmā and the *ṛṣis* (1.5-23). Although this is a very detailed account of Hayagrīva's mythic act of recovering the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, there is, significantly, no mention of precisely how or why Viṣṇu came to have a horse-head.

Several other Āgamic passages associate Hayagrīva with the Vedas. According to *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* 3.58-62a, Hayagrīva both recovered the Vedas from the demons and is the possessor of the knowledge of the Vedas. *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* 24.35b describes Hayagrīva as being in the form of the Vedas: "The horse-faced one who is the Vedas, *smṛti*, [and] has the quality of pervading the universe completely". Although the *Lakṣmī Tantra* has the goddess Lakṣmī as its primary focus, it too describes Hayagrīva as the representation of the four Vedas (*Lakṣmī Tantra* 36.16-18). Finally, there are also references in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas depicting Hayagrīva as

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[33] The *saṃhitās* often begin with a description of the lineage of transmission, connecting the Āgama with gods, and ultimately with the Supreme.

carrying the book of wisdom (*vijñāna-pustaka*) (see 'Iconographical Depictions' below), which may also reasonably be interpreted as the Vedas (*Padma Saṃhitā* 22.2-7; *Parāśara Saṃhitā* 27.6-23; *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* 24.356).

1.2. *Overview of the Diachronic Dimension of Hayagrīva's Theological and Ritual Status in the Temple according to the Pāñcarātra Āgamas*[34]

I.   Classical period (200 B.C.-500 C.E.)

II.   Early Medieval period (500-800 C.E.)

i. *Sātvata Saṃhitā*: *gauṇa* (minor) status (ambiguous)
ii. *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā*: *mukhya* (major) status
iii. *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*: *gauṇa* (minor) status

III.   Middle Medieval period (800-1000 C.E.)

i. *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*: emanation from the *vyūha* Aniruddha; *gauṇa* (minor) status
ii. *Padma Saṃhitā*: emanation from the *vyūha* Aniruddha or Saṃkarṣaṇa; *gauṇa* (minor) status; *parivāra-devatā* (attendant deity)
iii. *Sanatkumara Saṃhitā*: *parivāra-devata* (attendant deity)
iv. *Nāradīya Saṃhitā*: *vimāna-devatā* (deity on temple tower); *dvāra-pālaka* (doorkeeper)
v. *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*: *mukhya* (major) status; *gauṇa* (minor) status

IV.   Late Medieval period (1000-1500 C.E.)

i. *Śeṣa Saṃhitā*: *mukhya* (major) status
ii. *Lakṣmī Tantra*: *gauṇa* (minor) status (ambiguous)
iii. *Parāśara Saṃhitā*: *mukhya* (major) status

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[34] The chronological periods for Āgamas is based on Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 34-35.

iv. *Īśvara Saṃhitā*: (ambiguous) status
v. *Viśvamitra Saṃhitā*: emanation from the *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa; *mukhya* (major) status; *vimāna-devatā* (deity on temple tower)

The *Mahābhārata* provides the earliest reference about Hayagrīva's origins; according to this Epic, he is an emanation from the *vyūha* Aniruddha. This notion was also included in the middle medieval Āgamas (*Viṣvaksena*, *Padma*). By way of contrast, an early medieval Purāṇa —*Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa*—describes Hayagrīva as an emanation from the *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa. Like the Purāṇa, *Padma* and *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitās*, which were written in the middle medieval period, describe Hayagrīva as an emanation from Saṃkarṣaṇa.

Hayagrīva's theological status based on the *vibhava-avatāric* listings and placement of his icon in the temple prescribed in the Pāñcarātra corpus is not only inconsistent according to different texts, but important discrepancies are found even within a single text. Furthermore, there is inconsistency regarding Hayagrīva's status as a major *avatāra* in the texts belonging to any one specific period; that is, *there is no evidence of the rise or decline over time in his status or importance.*

1.3. The Devatā, Mantra, and Yantra Forms of Hayagrīva in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas

Although the Āgamas discuss extensively the various emanations of Viṣṇu (especially *vyūha* and *vibhava-avatāra*), the texts also depict other categories involving the three forms of a deity: *devatā* (personifying), mantra (sonic), and *yantra* (symbolic).[35] The three forms are found specifically with reference to Hayagrīva, and the linkage among the three is said to be for purposes of ritual practice. These three forms are the means of linking the devotee with God. Mantras recited while performing the worship (*pūjā*) rituals are said to bring single-minded concentration on the divine, of which they are the primary form. Similarly, the visual meditation involving a *yantra* and the worship of the *devatā* form of a god also function as links between the devotee and the divine.

According to Sanjukta Gupta, in Pāñcarātra, unlike the stance of the Śaiva/Śākta Tantric sects, the power derived from mantra is solely the fruit

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[35] See Sanjukta Gupta, "The Pāñcarātra Attitude to Mantra", in *Mantra*, ed. Harvey P. Alper (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 224-48.

of God's grace; this position is based on its (i.e., Vaiṣṇava Tantric) conception of the forms of God (such as *vyūha* and *vibhava-avatāra*).[36] In viewing the ambiguity and inconsistency in the theological and temple ritual status of Hayagrīva in the Pāñcarātra corpus, it is important to note that, though many of the *devatā* descriptions of Hayagrīva seem to qualify him as a minor god, the descriptions of his mantra and *yantra* frequently endow him with qualities belonging only to the Supreme God Viṣṇu. *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* 24.35b (ca. 500 C.E.) describes Hayagrīva's mantraic form as having "the quality of pervading the universe completely" for the attainment of an awareness of Reality. Similarly, *Śeṣa Saṃhitā* 29.18-19 (ca. 800 C.E.) provides prescriptions for Hayagrīva's mantraic and *yantraic* forms: "The Highest Being, God who has the neck of a horse [and is] in the form of consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*) has a body decorated by full splendour/light."

As mentioned before, although the Āgamas are the foundational texts of Hindu temple ritual in the South, the Purāṇas are the basis of temple practice in the North. Because there are Purāṇic references concerned with temple practice regarding Hayagrīva in the encyclopedic Purāṇas, which are the basis of north Indian temple ritual, I think it is crucial to compare the Āgamic references with them in order to shed light on the relation between certain of the Purāṇas and the Āgamas.

2. A COMPARISON OF THE DEPICTIONS OF HAYAGRĪVA IN THE PURĀṆAS AND ĀGAMAS

2.1. *Encyclopedic Purāṇas*

As seen in Chapter Three, the Purāṇic corpus not only contains several myths about Hayagrīva, but certain of the texts also provide iconographical descriptions of the deity. The encyclopedic Purāṇas, as mentioned previously, were first termed so by Pandurang Vaman Kane in his four-fold classification of the Purāṇic texts, based on the fact that they contain a variety of unrelated subjects. Included in the category are *Agni Purāṇa*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, and *Nārada Purāṇa*. Although the texts have been viewed as unreliable (because they do not follow the *pañcalakṣaṇa*[37] framework),

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[36] Gupta, "The Pāñcarātra Attitude to Mantra", p. 224.
[37] See Chapter Three.

the encyclopedic Purāṇas are valuable in that they contain fragments of ancient material, some of which has otherwise been lost.[38]

All three of the most important encyclopedic Purāṇas contain elaborate iconographical depictions of Hayagrīva. In fact, there is a striking continuity between the Pāñcarātra Āgamas' and the encyclopedic Purāṇas' depictions of Hayagrīva. This raises the question as to the relation between the Pāñcarātra Āgamas and the encyclopedic Purāṇas.

It is interesting to note that the passages which refer to Hayagrīva in the *Agni Purāṇa* are similar in orientation to Pāñcarātra texts (such as the *Padma Saṃhitā*) in which the central focus is the construction of temples, temple rituals and the like. Surprisingly, *Agni Purāṇa* contains fifty chapters on iconography (Chapters 21-70), which have been described by Rocher as "*a summary of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas*".[39]

Firstly, *Agni Purāṇa* (ca. 600-800 C.E.) contains what is probably the earliest list of twenty-four *avatāras*. Hayagrīva is mentioned in various lists of Viṣṇu's *avatāras* contained in the passages of the *Agni Purāṇa* concerned with ritual practice.[40] Some of the traditional *avatāras* and Hayagrīva are mentioned together in *Agni Purāṇa* 31.6 ('Mode of Cleansing Oneself and Others'), in which the god Agni describes the ritual of cleansing prescribed in order to free oneself from suffering and to attain joy. He states:

> Salutations...O Boar, Lord as man-lion, Lord as dwarf, Trivikrama, Lord as horse-necked one (Hayagrīveśa), Lord of all beings, Hṛṣīkeśa (the Lord of all senses), destroy my impurity.[41]

Similar to *Parāśara Saṃhitā* 27.10, *Agni Purāṇa* 49.26 describes the Hayagrīva (*haya-śiras*) form as one which should be represented as bearing the conch shell (*śaṅkha*), discus (*cakra*), mace (*gaḍa*), and book (*pustaka*). Here the emblems prescribed are the conventional emblems that Viṣṇu bears, except for Hayagrīva's holding of the book (normally Viṣṇu carries a lotus instead). Although the book is not part of Viṣṇu's usual paraphernalia, it highlights Hayagrīva's role as an *avatāra* who came to

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[38] Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 80.

[39] Rocher, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 134-135.

[40] According to de Mallmann, *Agni Purana* evolved during 6th-9th century C.E. See de Mallmann, *Les Enseignment Iconographiques*, p. 10. See also Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu*, pp. 3-10.

[41] All quotations from the *Agni Purāṇa* are taken from: *Agni Purāṇa*, Parts 1 and 2, (translated and annotated by N. Gangadharan) (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984).

earth to rescue the Vedas. Furthermore, like *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* 25.16-25,
Agni Purāṇa 49.26 states that Hayagrīva's left foot should be represented
as resting on the serpent Śeṣa (*śeṣa-nāga*), and his right foot should rest on
a tortoise. This particular reference is significant because, among all the
Āgamas and Purāṇas surveyed, it appears only in these two texts, which
accentuates the close relation between the Āgama and the encyclopedic
Agni Purāṇa.

Following the more consistent depictions of Hayagrīva's association
with the northern or northeastern regions, *Agni Purāṇa* 108.15.22-30
('Cosmographical Account') refers to Hayagrīva as a form of Viṣṇu who
resides in Bhadrāśva. The fire-god describes the seven continents and
oceans, mountains, and rivers:

> The Meru [mountain] lies between them in the shape of a lotus. [The
> countries] Bhārata, Ketumālā, Bhadrāśva, and Kurus, situated outside these
> boundary mountains, are the petals of this lotus of the world.... O Excellent
> sage! Abodes of the [goddess] Lakṣmī, and [lords] Viṣṇu, Agni, Sūrya and
> other gods are situated in the caves in the mountains of Keśara and others.
> They are the abodes of gods on the earth. Sinners do not go there. Lord Viṣṇu
> resides in Bhadrāśva as Hayagrīva, in Ketumālā as Varāha.

The passage describes Hayagrīva as dwelling in Bhadrāśva, a mythological
region in the north. Similarly *Agni Purāṇa* 42.24-25 prescribes that the
Hayagrīva icon should face north, as do many of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas
(*Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* 17.37, *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* 21.68-69, *Sanatkumāra
Saṃhitā* 4.24, *Nāradīya Saṃhitā* 14.106, *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* 13 and 14).
According to de Mallmann, the Tantric portions in the *Agni Purāṇa* which
are concerned with the north or northeast correspond to Kashmir and
Bengal and Orissa, respectively.[42]

The *Agni Purāṇa* also contains several rather obscure references to
Hayagrīva, linking him to *śālagrāma* stones[43] and cosmology. *Śālagrāma*

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[42] de Mallmann, *Les Enseignment Iconographiques*, p. 10. According to van Kooij, some
Śākta Tantric practices originated among people in Northwestern India which then spread
towards the East towards Bengal and as far as Assam wherein they became central. K.R. van
Kooij, *Worship of the Goddess According to the Kālikā Purāṇa* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp.
34f.

[43] In the Śrīvaiṣṇava sect of South India, the daily worship of *śālagrāma* stones parallels
that of the icon (*arcā*); that is, the stone is greeted with the chanting of the Āḷvār hymns in
the morning, bathed and adorned with sandalpaste and flowers. Furthermore, the water from
the bathing of the *śālagrāma* stone is used as *śrīpadatīrtam*, and the food cooked in the
household is always offered to the stone before being eaten by the people of the household
as *prasāda*. Consequently, households that have *śālagrāma* stones have to maintain ritual

stones are regarded as inherently full-forms of the Supreme God, and therefore do not need to be consecrated for worship. In *Agni Purāṇa* 46.7 ('Characteristics of Different *Śālagrāma* Stones'), the Lord describes the different gods represented by different kinds of *śālagrāma* stones, which are said to yield enjoyment and emancipation:

> Hayagrīva [stone] has a line in the shape of god. It is blue [coloured] and is dotted. The Vaikuṇṭha [stone] has [the mark of] a disc and lotus. It has the radiance of a gem. It has tail-shaded lines.

Furthermore, *Agni Purāṇa* 42.24-25 ('Construction of a Temple') describes the building of a temple, the walls, pathways, arches, the position of the icons, and the direction the temple should face. It prescribes the placing of a Hayagrīva icon facing north.

Similar to the *Agni Purāṇa*, the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (ca. 800 C.E.) is also an encyclopedic text. Chapter 202 of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* provides a list of many different forms (*mūrtis*) of Viṣṇu; the 'traditional ten' are, of course, present but several others, including Hayagrīva, are likewise listed.[44] Similarly, in *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.13.1-10 ('Visnu-*pañjara-stotra*'), where Hara requests the protection of Viṣṇu, Hayagrīva is mentioned among the many epithets and *avatāras* of Viṣṇu.

> Taking up Viṣṇu's garland (*vaijayantī*) and mole (*śrīvatsa*) protect me in the northeast. O Hayagrīva, obeisance to Thee.[45]

There is also a complete chapter of fifty-seven verses on 'The Worship of Hayagrīva' (*Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.34) in which Hari describes the deity's worship. Hayagrīva is depicted as a benevolent form of Viṣṇu and in v. 50 (wherein he is called *haya-śiras*) he is described as the presiding deity of learning. The chapter discusses the recitation of the Hayagrīva *mūla-mantra* and contains descriptions of Hayagrīva as having cheeks crimson in colour and a complexion as white as a conch shell, the moon, and a *kuṇḍa* flower. His sheen is compared to that of a lotus stalk or silver. The description of Hayagrīva's white complexion appears in the later Śākta references as well as in the ritual hymns that follow the Vedic and Āgamic

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purity. See Vasudha Narayanan, "Arcāvatāra: On Earth as He is in Heaven", in *God of Flesh/God of Stone: The Embodiment of Divinity in India*, ed. by Joanne Punzo Waghorne and Norman Cutler (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: Anima Books, 1985), pp. 53-66.

[44] Matsya, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Narasiṃha, Rāma, Varāha, Nārāyaṇa, Kapila, Datta, Makaradhvaja, Nārada, Kūrma, Dhanvantari, Śeṣa, Yajña, Vyāsa, Buddha, Kalkin.

[45] *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (edited by J. L. Shastri) (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), p.42.

traditions (see Chapter Eight). As in *Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā* 3.58-62a, he is
described as bearing in his hands the *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa* and *padma*, all
conventional emblems of Viṣṇu. Hayagrīva is further described as wearing
a crown, earrings, wild flowers, and a yellow garment, as in conventional
depictions of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa. Verse 26 states that the seat of the deity shall
be made auspicious with the daily worship offerings (*pūjā*) of fragrant
pastes, flowers, incense, light, and food.

   Nārada Purāṇa (ca. 950 C.E.), the other remaining encyclopedic
Purāṇa, likewise contains a chapter on the worship of Hayagrīva. In 3.72
('The Worship of Hayagrīva'), Sanatkumāra, a great sage, describes the
proper worship to be performed. Hayagrīva is referred to as white like a
pearl and as stationed in the moon with a lustre similar to the snow-capped
mountains. Again, a similar description of Hayagrīva's white complexion
appears in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas and in the later Śākta references, as well
as in the ritual hymns that follow the Vedic and Āgamic traditions (see
Chapter Eight). The performance of the *homa* sacrifice is recommended
along with the recitation of the *mūla-mantra*. Furthermore, v. 34 describes
Hayagrīva as the bestower of speech and prosperity:

> We shall then meditate on the deity—"I salute Hayagrīva whose lustre is
> equal to that of the snow-capped mountain, who is bedecked in garlands and
> *tulasī* leaves and whose high region is that of speech. ...(*Nārada Purāṇa*
> 3.72.32-36).[46]

2.2. *Pan-Indian Sectarian Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas*

The *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* (ca. 600-650 C.E.)[47] contains an important
prescriptive description of Hayagrīva.[48] As mentioned in Chapter Two,
Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa is one of the many *upa-purāṇas* that are
considered to be summaries of the eighteen principal Purāṇas (*mahā-
purāṇas*). In *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* 3.80.1-6, the sage Mārkaṇḍeya
tells Vajra about the horse-headed form of Viṣṇu.[49] In contrast to

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[46] Hazra ca. 875-1000 C.E. (1940: 127-133).
   Nārada Purāṇa, Vol. 17 (translation and annotation by Hemendra Nath Chakravorty)
(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), p. 1033.
   [47] According to Kane, the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* is the earliest *upa-purāṇa*, whereas
the others were written during the period of ca. 8th-9th century C.E. up to 1170 C.E. Kane,
History of the Dharmaśāstras, pp. 834-38.
   [48] See Chapter Three.
   [49] *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Mahāpurāṇa* (Bombay: Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, 1912).

Mahābhārata 12.327.79-87, which describes Hayagrīva as emanating from the *vyūha* Aniruddha, this Purāṇa claims (as does *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* 4.26) that Hayagrīva is an emanation from the *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa (3.80.3b). Although the reference in the *Mahābhārata* differs in that it describes Hayagrīva as emanating from Aniruddha, it is significant that there is an ancient association of the Hayagrīva deity with the *vyūhas*, which is continued in the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* and in the Āgamas (see the section above on Āgamic references in which Hayagrīva is described as emanating from Saṃkarṣaṇa and Aniruddha).

Furthermore, according to this text, the prescriptions for the icon of Hayagrīva are that the image should have the head of a horse, wear blue garments, and bear in his four hands the several iconographical emblems commonly associated with Viṣṇu—*śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gada*, and *padma* (3.80.3b-4a). Here, Hayagrīva bears the same emblems that are listed in *Parāśara Saṃhitā* 27.10. More significantly, Hayagrīva's remaining four arms should be placed upon the four personified forms of the Vedas (3.80.4b-5a). Although carrying the book (sometimes specified as that of wisdom) is continuous with several common Āgamic depictions of Hayagrīva, there are no other references in the texts surveyed that refer to Hayagrīva as having his hands placed on the personified forms of the Vedas. The passage also refers to his *avatāric* activity of recovering the Vedas from the two demons in ancient times (3.80.6).

2.3. *Comparison of the Depictions of Hayagrīva's Iconographical Paraphernalia in the Āgamas and the Purāṇas*

II. Classical period (200 B.C.-500 C.E.)

A. Purāṇas:[50]
  i. *Matsya Purāṇa*: *śaṅkha* (conch shell), *cakra* (discus), *gada* (mace), *pustaka* (book)

III. Early Medieval period (500-800 C.E.)

A. Purāṇas:
  i. *Agni Purāṇa*: *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gada*, *pustaka*

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[50] See 'A General Chronology for Hindu Texts' in Chapter One for the basis of the chronological periods for the Purāṇas.

ii. *Lalitā Mahātmyā* (*Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*): *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *akṣa-mālā*, *pustaka*

iii. *Garuḍa Purāṇa*: *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma* (lotus)

iv. *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa*: *śaṅkha*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, four personified forms of the Vedas

B. Āgamas:

i. *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā*: *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *akṣa-mālā* (rosary of beads), *pustaka*

IV. Middle Medieval period (800-1000 C.E.)

B. Āgamas:

i. *Padma Saṃhitā*: *śaṅkha*, *varada-mudrā* (hand position of boon bestowal), *vijñāna-pustaka* (book of wisdom), *akṣa-sūtra*, *gaḍa*

ii. *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā*: *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma*

iii. *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*: *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *pustaka*

IV. Late Medieval period (1000-1500 C.E.)

B. Āgamas:

i. *Śeṣa Saṃhitā*: *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *mudrā* (handposition), *pustaka*

ii. *Īśvara Saṃhitā*: *śaṅkha*, *padma*, *mālā* (rosary), *pustaka*

iii. *Parāśara Saṃhitā*: *cakra*, *padma*, Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī, *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, *jñāna-pustaka* (book of knowledge); *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, *jñāna-pustaka*, *pāśa* (rope), *aṅkuśa* (staff); *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma*, *jñāna-pustaka*, *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, *agni-vajra* (fire-bolt)

The iconographical paraphernalia that Hayagrīva bears in his hands parallels the emblems carried by Viṣṇu: *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gaḍa*, *padma*. However, the *pustaka*, appropriate for Hayagrīva (but which is not an emblem that Viṣṇu ordinarily bears), appears in the earliest iconographical depictions of him in both the Purāṇas and Āgamas. By way of contrast, the *akṣa-mālā* is carried by Hayagrīva only in the Āgamic texts. Interestingly, it is an instrument for mantra recitation—a common Tantric practice.

Similarly, the later iconographical depictions (later medieval period) of Hayagrīva in which he bears the *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, and *agni-vajra* are also limited to the Āgamic texts. These later iconographical paraphernalia are similar to the emblems carried by Hayagrīva in the Buddhist pantheon. The

similarities between Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism must either be the result of (1) a common source, or (2) the fact that Buddhists have borrowed from Hindus or that Hindus have borrowed from Buddhists. In the case of common origins, the presence of *so many similarities* make it likely that many concepts, symbols, and rituals in the Āgamas are derived from non-Vedic indigenous traditions that have been transformed according to the specific requirements of the sectarian traditions.

3. HAYAGRĪVA IN THE SECTARIAN ĀGAMIC-TANTRIC TRADITIONS: ŚAIVA AND ŚĀKTA

3.1. *Hayagrīva and the Śaiva Āgamic Tradition*

Unlike Vaiṣṇavism, the notion of *avatāra* is not a feature of Śaivism. However, the concept of *mūrti* (embodiment of Śiva) is an important concept, especially in the Śaiva Āgamas and the later South Indian school of Śaiva Siddhānta, centred in Tamil Nadu. Unlike the Vaiṣṇava Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta tradition, *mūrti* is secondary to the experience of knowledge in Śaiva Siddhānta. Although Śiva's embodiments do not have the same philosophical or theological status as do Viṣṇu's in the aforementioned Vaiṣṇava tradition, the worship of them is a very salient feature of South Indian Śaivism.[51]

The Śaiva Āgamas list up to twenty-five different *mūrtis* of Śiva. The manuals describe in detail the attire, postures, weapons, and ornaments of Śiva appropriate to each *mūrti*. According to *Kāraṇa Āgama*, there are twenty-five *mūrtis* of Śiva, most of which are present in South Indian temples.[52] The *mūrtis* may be classified under two broad headings: (1) *ugra* (*ghora*), the 'terrific' aspect of Śiva, which may or may not be present in myths commonly associated with the god; and (2) *saumya* (*śānta*), the

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[51] Based on her study on Tantric Śaiva cults, Sanderson looks at the primary importance of Śaiva metaphysics (and higher than the performance of rituals). Alexis Sanderson, "The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika" in *L'Image Divine: Culte et Meditation dans l'Hindouisme*, edited by André Padoux (Paris: Edition du CNRS, 1990), pp. 31-88. In her study on the Śaiva Āgamic sect, Brunner explores the difference between the mental and concrete images of Śiva in the Āgamas. Hélène Brunner, "L'Image Divine dans le Culte Āgamique de Śiva" in *L'Image Divine*, pp. 9-29.

[52] The *Kāraṇa Āgama* is one of the ten Āgamas regarded as authoritative by all Śaiva Āgamic traditions, including Śaiva Siddhānta. The text is dualistic in philosophical perspective; it is believed to have been received by Kāraṇa, Sarva, and Prājāpati.

'peaceful' aspect of Śiva, which either may or may not be associated with a particular Śaivite story. The latter *saumya* type of *mūrti* is believed by Jitendra Nath Banerjea to be continuous with the earliest known form of Śiva, that is, the representations of Śiva on ancient coins and seals from the Indus Valley civilization.[53] Of the twenty-five forms of Śiva that are predominantly found in South Indian temples, Banerjea claims that the most important is Dakṣiṇāmūrti.[54] According to T.A. Gopinatha Rao, the etymology of *dakṣiṇā-mūrti* (image facing south) reflects the belief that "Śiva was seated facing south when he taught the sages yoga and *jñāna*".[55] However, as argued by Hans Bakker, there is incongruity among the textual reference (Kauṇḍinya's commentary on the Pāśupatasūtras) and the later class of sculptures almost exclusively found in the South. Bakker holds that a cult concept was developed and incorporated in later iconographical texts. As a consequence, while the role of this original image was maintained (the expounder of wisdom), the direction in which God faces (his 'right side' became his 'south face') had changed.[56]

Generally, Dakṣiṇāmūrti's complexion is white and is compared to the appearance of crystal (*sphaṭika*), just as is Hayagrīva's in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. Unlike Hayagrīva, however, Śiva's body is smeared with ashes, and he has matted locks, three eyes, four arms, and his left leg rests on his right thigh. Even though no references to Hayagrīva have been located in the Śaiva Āgamas surveyed, the iconographical depictions of Hayagrīva and those of one of the several forms of Dakṣiṇāmūrti are remarkably similar. Dakṣiṇāmūrti has four different forms: (1) *yoga-mūrti* (teacher of *yoga*), (2) *vīṇādhara-mūrti* (bearer of the *vīṇā* instrument), (3) *jñāna-mūrti* (expounder of wisdom), and (4) *vyākhyāna-mūrti* (expounder of the Śāstras).[57]

The form of Dakṣiṇāmūrti most frequently found in temples is the

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[53] Jitendra Nath Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1974), pp. 464-5.

[54] Although Dakṣiṇāmūrti may be one of the more important *mūrtis* of Śiva in the South, there are very few references to him in the 'mainstream' pan-Indian texts. In *Śiva Purāṇa* 33.16-17, there is a reference to the worship of Dakṣiṇāmūrti without any details as to His form or role. In *Nārada Purāṇa* 3.91.127, there is a reference to the *dakṣiṇāmūrti-mantra*.

[55] T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol II Part 1, (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1971), pp. 273-274.

[56] Hans Bakker, "Dakṣiṇāmūrti" in *Vidyārṇavavandanam: Essays in Honour of Asko Parpola*. Edited by K. Karttunen and P. Koskikallio (Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society, 2001), pp. 41-53.

[57] Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, pp. 273-292; Sastri, *South-Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, pp. 89-93.

vyākhyāna-mūrti, with Śiva seated under a banyan tree on either a tiger skin or a white lotus. His right forearm is in the hand position of knowledge (*jñāna-mudrā*) or the pose of exposition (*saṃdarśana*), his left forearm is either in the boon-bestowing (*varada*) position or holds a book (*pustaka*), the right upper arm holds the rosary (*akṣa-mālā*), and the left upper arm holds either a snake (*sarpa*) or a lotus (*padma*). The *vyākhyāna-mūrti* is not only the most popular form of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, but it is also the form that is most continuous with the Pāñcarātra depictions of Hayagrīva (both iconographically and in terms of their similar roles as the Expounder of the Śāstras and wisdom).

The iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas parallel the iconographical features of the *vyākhyāna* form of Dakṣiṇā-mūrti, which came to represent the ascetic tradition in Śaiva Siddhānta. The iconographical similarities in the Vaiṣṇava depictions of Hayagrīva and the Śaiva descriptions of the *vyākhyāna* form of Dakṣiṇāmūrti reflect continuities that, in the Āgamas, transcend sectarianism. The role of Dakṣiṇāmūrti (and Hayagrīva) is consistent with the philosophy of the Śaiva Āgamas:

> Their philosophy mainly concentrates upon the power of Speech, i.e. upon the power of the energy concealed in the Divine Word, an insight which is the basis of their theory of mantras.[58]

As aforementioned, it is likely that many concepts, symbols, and rituals in the Āgamas (especially the ones not commonly found in the early Purāṇas) are derived from non-Vedic indigenous traditions that later were transformed according to the specific requirements of the sectarian traditions and only later written down in the Āgamic texts.

3.2. *Hayagrīva and the Śākta Āgamic-Tantric Tradition*

Although no references to Hayagrīva could be located in the Śaiva Āgamas surveyed for this study, there are passages about the deity present in three later Śākta Tantric texts:[59] *Śāradātilaka Tantra*, *Meru Tantra*, and *Yoginī*

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[58] Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 167.

[59] It is believed that the Śākta Tantra has been heavily influenced by the Śaiva Āgamic tradition, and that these later Śākta texts have drawn from many other sources, including the Purāṇas (*Devībhāgavata*, *Kālikā*, *Skanda*, *Brahmāṇḍa*) and Pāñcarātra Āgamas (*Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*, *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*). For Śāktas, the divine energy is approached in three different ways: (1) mantra, (2) *kuṇḍalinī* (life-force), and (3) icon and *maṇḍala* forms of the Goddess.

Tantra. In *Śāradātilaka Tantra* (ca. 1000 C.E.),[60] Chapter 15 vs. 72-74, Hayagrīva is described as having a pure white lustre of the autumn moon, a horse face, and is decorated with pearls. The text does not explicitly describe the number of hands; that is, whether the deity has two or four hands.[61] However, the horse-headed image implicitly appears to be one that should typically have four-arms; the two upper hands should carry the disc (*rathānga*) and conch shell (*śaṅkha*), whereas the lower two hands should be placed on the knees in the meditative pose, *yogāsana* (15.75). This description of Hayagrīva in a meditative pose is appropriate to the context, as its description is followed by esoteric descriptions of mantra, *mudrā*, *japa* and so forth of the horse-headed deity.

   In *Meru Tantra* (ca. post-11th century C.E.),[62] Chapter 28 vs. 10-52, Hayagrīva is described as having a white complexion, and is decorated with ornaments held in his hand, including the rosary (*mālā*), book (*pustaka*), and lotus (*paṅkaja*) (28.51). The iconographical descriptions are similar to the iconographical passages in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (see, for example, *Padma Saṃhitā*). Besides the description of an image of Hayagrīva in the *Meru Tantra*, the text provides esoteric information regarding the mantra, *yantra* and *japa* of Hayagrīva. The description of the mantra is similar to that described in the *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* (see Chapter Eight of this study).

   Chapter 9 of the *Yoginī Tantra* (ca. 16th century C.E.?)[63] refers to the worship of Hayagrīva at Maṇikūṭa Hill, near the village Hajo in Assam (Kāmarūpa). This Tantric text belongs to the Śākta Āgamic tradition, and its narrative framework is that of a dialogue between Pārvatī and Śiva.[64] It describes the worship of Hayagrīva-Madhava. The worship of Hayagrīva

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S.K. Rao, *Āgama-kosha Vol. II Śākta and Śaiva Āgamas* (Bangalore: Kalpatharu Research Academy, 1990), pp. 171-173.

   [60] The *Śāradātilaka Tantra* is believed to have been written by Lakṣmaṇadeśika in the 11th century. See Gudrun Bühnemann, *Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities Vol. II The Pantheons of the Prapañcasāra and the Śāradātilaka* (Groningen: E. Forsten, 2001), pp. 145-148. *Śāradātilakatantra*, by Lakṣmaṇa Deśikendra with commentary by Raghāvabhatta (Benares City: Jai Krishnadās Haridās Gupta, 1934).

   [61] Bühnemann, *Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities Vol. II* , p. 250.

   [62] The *Meru Tantra*, according to tradition, is the earliest of the three. (Rao, 1990, pp. 171-173). However, scholars now date it much later than the *Śāradātilaka Tantra*. Gupta and Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature*, p. 98. *Merutantram* (Mumbai: Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, [first edition 1830], 1965).

   [63] Jaiswal, "The Demon and the Deity", pp. 40-57.

   [64] *Yoginī Tantra*, edited by Gaṅgāviṣṇu Śrī Kṛṣṇadās (Kalyaṇa, Mumbai: Lakṣmī Veṅka-ṭeśvara Press, 1983). For a similar narrative framework, see the *Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat* in Chapter Seven of this study.

at Maṇikūṭa Hill appears to be of the Left-handed Tantric sect, based on the fact that there are no restrictions on meat eating and sex.

3.3. *Hayagrīva in the Light of Sectarian Iconographical Texts*

It is important to move beyond the traditional Epic and Purāṇic texts and to examine analytically the various other Hindu religious streams. These other streams have played a significant role in the development of Indian deities. In the case of Hayagrīva, it is crucial to study the Āgamic texts as they provide 'prescriptive descriptions' for the practical and ritual aspects of the worship of Hayagrīva among the three sectarian Āgamic esoteric and temple-based traditions. Significantly, the Hayagrīva myth does not appear to be primary in the Āgamas, which rather emphasize the iconography and worship of Hayagrīva.

Because India has such a diversity of peoples and cultures, it is difficult to say anything regarding the development of a deity without being tentative.[65] By studying the Hayagrīva deity as depicted in the Āgamic literature synchronically, the continuities and discontinuities among various sectarian traditions (Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śākta) are made evident. In the case of Hayagrīva, it appears that the depiction of the deity has varied according to sect and text. In respect of continuities, certainly both convergence and interchange between pan-Indian and local indigenous traditions must be one factor in this feature. Still the question remains: Is the continuity in similar religious beliefs, symbols, and motifs the consequence of mutual borrowing and/or the consequence of traditions having common origins that subsequently became transformed? The similarities among Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śāktism are either a result of (1) a common source, or (2) the fact that Śaivas/Śāktas have borrowed from Vaiṣṇavas or that Vaiṣṇavas have borrowed from Śaivas/Śāktas. But how can one possibly establish who borrowed from whom when it is not possible to date texts precisely (and even more so the oral traditions)? The presence of so many similarities does, however, suggest that many concepts, symbols and rituals in the Āgamas are derived from non-Vedic indigenous traditions that

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[65] Certain divine figures may have a relatively more simple history. For example, the main deity of the Siṃhācalam Temple clearly represents the incorporation of the indigenous figure occurring only at the local level, adapted to the development of the Vaiṣṇava tradition in the South India milieu; that is, the local indigenous figure is transformed into Narasiṃha. See Dr. K. Sundaram, *The Simhachalam Temple* (Waltair: Andhra University Press, 1969).

were then transformed according to the specific requirements of the
sectarian tradition. Although there is the possibility of a common source in
specific regions (like Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva Āgamic depictions of the
expounder of the Śāstras as in Hayagrīva and Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the South
Indian milieu), the religious motifs, beliefs, and rituals appear to have been
reworked over time in each tradition. The 'histories' of a god, as evident
in the case of the Hayagrīva deity, are based on a multifaceted process
wherein there is the reworking of myth, iconography, and ritual, at many
levels, including the pan-Indian 'mainstream' Purāṇas, sectarian Āgamas,
and regional beliefs and practices.

4. CONCLUSION

The Pāñcarātric references to Hayagrīva can be analysed from the
viewpoint of theology, ritual and iconography. They contain some
interesting adaptations and variations as to his role and nature. Firstly, there
is discrepancy among them as to the source of Hayagrīva; that is, the deity
is described in some texts as an emanation from Saṃkarṣaṇa (*Viśvāmitra*),
and in others as an emanation from Aniruddha (*Viṣvaksena*, *Padma*).
Secondly, there is ambiguity in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas regarding the
theological status of Hayagrīva: though in some texts the deity is depicted
as a primary (*mukhya*) form of Viṣṇu, other Āgamas describe him as a
secondary (*gauṇa*) *avatāra*. Furthermore, in some texts, he is described as
an auxiliary deity, depicted as a *dvāra-pālaka* (doorkeeper) in *Nāradīya
Saṃhitā* 15.226, or as a *vimāna-devatā* (deity placed on a temple tower) in
Nāradīya Saṃhitā 14.106 and *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* 21.68-69, or as a
parivāra-devatā (attendant deity) in *Padma Saṃhitā* 22.2b-8a.

   The iconographical features described in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas differ
regarding the number of arms Hayagrīva possesses or the emblems he bears
in his hands. Although Hayagrīva is always depicted as bearing the conch
shell (*śaṅkha*) and the discus (*cakra*), he may or may not carry in his other
hands the mace (*gaḍa*), the lotus (*padma*), the book (*pustaka*), and the
rosary beads (*akṣa-sūtra*). Some texts also describe him as having one hand
in the specific position (*mudrā*) representing wisdom.

   Although there are striking inconsistencies as to the theological status
of Hayagrīva in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, the texts are more consistent in
their depictions of Hayagrīva as an icon placed in the north or northeast
direction of the temple. Perhaps temple design and ritual practice are more
central to Āgamic concerns than theological viewpoint.

Interestingly, the form of Śiva that is revered by Śaivas as the expounder of the Śāstras—Dakṣiṇāmūrti—is continuous with Hayagrīva in both its theological and ritual functions. Although Dakṣiṇāmūrti's image is different from Hayagrīva's, they are both Lords of learning and wisdom, and they share several unusual and specific emblems. It is striking that both the theological and ritual functions in respect of the two deities remain the same, even though they are associated with different sects.

For a further development in the understanding of Hayagrīva, we now turn to the worship of the god in the region of Tamil Nadu. Moving beyond the ritual texts based on the Āgamas, we encounter here a confluence of Āgamic ritual understanding of deity (*devatā*, mantra, and *yantra*) and Bhakti that involves the emotional worship of a personalized God. We now move from the *complexity* of the pan-Indian depictions of the Hayagrīva figure (Part Two) to the *selectivity* found in the local depictions of the Hayagrīva God in Tamil Nadu (Part Three), the region in which Hayagrīva is presently worshipped as Supreme—the subject of the next four chapters.

PART THREE

SELECTIVITY IN THE REGIONAL DEPICTIONS
OF A PAN-INDIAN DEITY:
HAYAGRĪVA IN TAMIL NADU

CHAPTER FIVE

TAMIL DEVOTIONALISM: HAYAGRĪVA IN THE HYMNS OF THE ĀḶVĀRS AND AN EARLY ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVA ĀCĀRYA

The pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition must be viewed in relation to regional traditions as there has been a long-standing interaction between the two. The development of the worship of Hayagrīva clearly reflects this interaction. Although a 'relatively' minor pan-Indian deity, Hayagrīva is revered as a full form of the Supreme God in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition of South India.[1] Consequently, it is essential to provide a thorough analysis of the depictions of Hayagrīva in the South, with a particular focus on Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Hayagrīva was known to the Āḷvārs, for several of their poetic stanzas refer to Him in the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*[2]—regarded by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as the 'Tamil Veda', with a status equal to that of the Sanskrit Vedas. Hayagrīva is also mentioned in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which—although it is now a pan-Indian text—has its origins in, and has been highly influenced by, the religiosity of the Tamil-speaking region of South India.[3] And, finally, the *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava* composed by Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, a Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya during the formative years of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, contains a stanza in praise of Hayagrīva. The full development of Hayagrīva's status and role in the Tamil milieu reflects the particular Śrīvaiṣṇava theological understanding that the Supreme God Viṣṇu appears in a multiplicity of places in His full form as a temple icon.

This chapter provides an overview and an analysis of the several references to Hayagrīva found in the texts composed in the South Indian milieu prior to Vedānta Deśika; that is, it offers a survey of the references to Hayagrīva contained in the *Divya Prabandham*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava*. Because this chapter has as its major concern Hayagrīva as an *avatāra* within the

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[1] All epithets for the Hayagrīva deity in this section will be capitalized to underline the fact that He is revered as the full form of the Supreme God Lord Viṣṇu.

[2] *Nālāyira Tivviyap Pirapantam* (edited by by K. Veṅkaṭacāmi Reṭṭiyar) (Ceṉṉai [Madras]: Tiruveṅkaṭattāṉ Tirumaṉṟam, 1987). Although the Tamil form is *Nālāyira Tivviyap Pirapantam*, I use the form more familiar to Sanskrit scholars—*Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*.

[3] Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 486-488.

context of Tamil Nadu and Śrīvaiṣṇavism, it is necessary to provide an overview of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition and its theological understanding of the five different forms that God takes in five different locales (which I have termed *topotheism*), before proceeding to the main analysis.

1. THE ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVA TRADITION

The Śrīvaiṣṇava *sampradāya* (system of religious teaching or an established doctrine transmitted from one teacher to another) is centred in the area of South India now known as Tamil Nadu. Its theological tenets and devotional spirituality are based on three main scriptural sources: (1) the pan-Indian texts, including *śruti* (Vedas and Vedānta Sūtras) and *smṛti* (Epics, Purāṇas, and Śāstras including *Manusmṛti*); (2) the Āgamas (ca. 500-1500 C.E.); and, lastly, (3) the Tamil hymns of the Āḻvārs (ca. 600-900 C.E.),[4] collectively referred to as the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, devotional poems that draw on both Tamil *caṅkam* poetry and pan-Indian motifs. Tamil *caṅkam* poetry is traced back to ca. 200 B.C.E. and was collected ca. 700-800 C.E. The *caṅkam* poems are of two basic types: heroic themes of war are treated in the *puṟam* (exterior) collection, and emotional love poems are the subject of the *akam* (interior) collection. The *akam* poems are based on depictions of five external landscapes, used in connection with highly stylized descriptions of interior-emotional states. This literary genre had a critical impact on the development of the later highly emotional Tamil Āḻvār Bhakti poetry.[5]

'Emotional' Bhakti became popular during the period of Medieval Hinduism (starting ca. 600 C.E. in South India and ca. 900-1000 C.E. in North India). In the Bhakti tradition, the devotee totally surrenders to God and lives a life of devotion to, and service of, Him. Surrender (*prapatti*) is the preferred religious act, which takes place by the divine grace of God. The salience of *prapatti* as a salvific act is one of the central features that distinguishes the emotional devotion (Bhakti) found in the Āḻvār hymns and Śrīvaiṣṇavism from the Bhakti-*yoga* promulgated in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In their hymns, the Āḻvārs take *prapatti* to be the ultimate religious act. The act

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[4] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 261-265.

[5] Hardy dates the classical Tamil poems from the 1st to the 9th centuries C.E. Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 120-237. For a detailed survey of the classical Tamil poetry along with a discussion about the problem of establishing an absolute and relative chronology, see Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), pp. 23-130.

of self-surrender is regarded as the preferred and easiest means to liberation, because this salvation is open to all irrespective of gender, caste or education, and is solely dependent on the grace of God.

It is unlikely that the religious beliefs of the Āḻvārs were based on a well-established, highly centralized tradition. The formal institutionalization of South Indian Vaiṣṇava devotionalism occurred later with the emergence of the Śrīvaiṣṇava lineage of Ācāryas. In the earliest period of Śrīvaiṣṇavism (ca. 10th century C.E.), the Tamil Āḻvār Bhakti poems began to be recognized as a full-fledged religious scripture with a status and importance equivalent to the Sanskrit Vedas. As such, the Āḻvār poems are called the 'Tamil Veda'. Śrīvaiṣṇavism's recognition of this two-fold heritage is captured in the term 'dual Vedānta' (*ubhaya-vedānta*). Nathamuni (ca. 10th century C.E.), the lineage's first historical Ācārya, is acknowledged as having established this *ubhaya-vedānta*. He is credited both with having recovered the 'lost' hymns of the Āḻvārs and with having instituted their chanting in ritual performances in the main Śrīvaiṣṇava temple at Śrīraṅgam.[6]

Nāthamuni's grandson Yāmuna (ca. first half of the 11th century) is the first Ācārya whose philosophical compositions are extant. He established the foundation of what later came to be called Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy—the philosophical-theological school of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Although Yāmuna accepted his orthodox brahminical heritage, he was sympathetic to the religious changes of his time (Bhakti and Tantra movements) which were considered heretical in orthodox circles. One of Yāmuna's greatest contributions to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition was his integration of popular temple-oriented Bhakti with the orthodox Vedic tradition. He did this in the form of a praise-poem called *Stotra-Ratna*, which remains the most highly revered *stotra* among Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

Further to this, Yāmuna wrote two major philosophical works: (1) *Siddhi Traya,* The [Establishment of the] Three *Siddhis* (Truths), and (2) *Āgama Prāmāṇyam,* The Authoritativeness of the [Pāñcarātra] Āgamas.[7] *Siddhi Traya* is an orthodox, philosophical text based on Vedānta philosophy. According to Yāmuna , the three *siddhis* are *ātman* (soul), *saṃvit* (matter),

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[6] Vasudha Narayanan, *The Way and the Goal: Expressions of Devotion in the Early Śrī Vaiṣṇava Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Vaiṣṇava Studies, 1987), pp. 55-57; John Braisted Carman and Vasudha Narayanan, *The Tamil Veda: Piḷḷāṉ's Interpretation of the Tiruvāymoḻi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 3-12, 180-190; Nancy Nayar, *Poetry as Theology:The Śrīvaiṣṇava Stotra in the Age of Rāmānuja* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), pp. 7-13.

[7] *Yāmuna's Āgama Prūmāṇyam* (translation by J.A.B. van Buienen) (Madras: Ramanuja Research Society, 1971), pp. 4-5.

and Īśvara (Lord). In the later Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, they came to be called *cit* (soul or consciousness), *acit* (matter), and Īśvara. The central argument in the *Āgama Prāmāṇyam* is two-fold: (1) on theological grounds, the Pāñcarātra Āgamas are said to have equal status with the Vedas, for both sets of texts are revealed by the Supreme Person (*puruṣottama*), and (2) on sociological grounds, the 'authentic' Pāñcarātrins are considered to be ortho-dox *brahmins*, because they perform rituals prescribed by both the Vedas and the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.[8]

The main theological problem that the classical Vedāntins have had with the Pāñcarātra Āgamas is their unique doctrine of the four *vyūhas* or the four-fold aggregate of cosmic emanations of the Supreme. Yāmuna, however, interpreted the four Vedānta Sūtras (II.2.42-45) so as to provide a defence of the legitimacy of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. He claimed that the *vyūhas* are not different gods, nor are they four different parts of the Supreme; rather, the *vyūhas* are four different forms that the Supreme takes in order to make Himself increasingly accessible (as He does in a more radical way by taking the *vibhava* and *arcā-avatāric* forms). Yāmuna further noted that Vedānta and the Āgamas are agreed on the notion of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Person.[9]

Although Yāmuna is revered as the initiator of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school, Rāmānuja (ca. 1077-1157 C.E.) is regarded by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as their greatest teacher and most eminent theologian.[10] Building on the thought of Yāmuna, Rāmānuja established a respectable and full-fledged Vedāntic philosophical foundation for devotional religion. Rāmānuja formulated a system of Vedānta compatible with the theistic devotion and temple ritual of Pāñcarātra. Even so, Rāmānuja quoted Pāñcarātra only in that section of his

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[8] *Yāmuna's Āgama Prūmāṇyam*, pp. 16-19. According to Neevel's analysis of Yāmuna's *Āgama Prāmāṇyam*, there are four classes of *brahmins*: Bhāgavata Class I: Traditionally called *vaiśya-vratya* (of the *vaiśya varṇa*), who lost their Vedic status because of their bhakti worship of Viṣṇu instead of following Vedic *karma*. Bhāgavata Class II: Temple priests who perform *pūjā* for devotees for their livelihood. Bhāgavata Class III: Bhāgavata *brahmins* who perform worship and rituals according to *Ekāyana Śākha*. Bhāgavata Class IV: Śiṣṭa *brahmins* who perform both orthodox Vedic rituals and rituals prescribed in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. Walter G. Neevel, Jr., *Yāmuna's Vedānta and Pāñcarātra: Integrating the Classical and the Popular* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 29-37.

[9] In Bādarāyaṇa's *Vedānta Sūtra* II.ii.42-45 *utpattyasambhavāt-adhikārana*, the 'Section on the Impossibility of Origination' has been, according to van Buitenen, the *prima facie* argument against heterodoxy. It is only in the later commentaries on the *Vedānta Sūtras* (i.e., Śaṅkara) that the contents are actually linked to the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. van Buitenen, *Yāmuna's Āgama Prāmāṇyam*, pp. 16-19.

[10] The dates for Rāmānuja are based on Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja*, pp. 44-47.

Śrī Bhāṣya where he was directly defending the authority of Pāñcarātra literature.[11]

Rāmānuja does not employ Pāñcarātric doctrines—such as the *vyūha* theory of cosmic emanations and the six qualities (*ṣaḍguṇas*) of Brahman—functionally within his Vedāntic system as Yāmuna had done.[12] Rather, in the *Śrī Bhāṣya*, Rāmānuja removes the *vyūha* theory from its original doctrinal and cosmological context as a theory of the manifestation of the universe, and appears to treat it solely in a devotional context as providing the sacred names of the Godhead to be used in meditation (*upāsana*). Although Rāmānuja mentions the four *vyūhas* and identifies them with the Supreme, he does not elaborate on the particular Pāñcarātric function or role of the emanations.[13] Likewise, Rāmānuja cites the six qualities of Brahman primarily in a devotional context and carefully distinguishes them from the five qualities that define Brahman's essential nature (*svarūpa*), which he derives from the Upaniṣads.[14] For Rāmānuja, the *ṣaḍguṇas* are secondary to the nature of Brahman as compared to the five defining attributes.[15]

According to Rāmānuja, the key relationship between the devotee and Viṣṇu is that of servant (*śeṣa*) and Master (*śeṣi*). The Supreme Being is the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) of that which is both sentient (*cit*) and non-sentient (*acit*). Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme God, is eternally accompanied by His consort Śrī (Lakṣmī). The importance of *avatāras* is their identity with the Supreme Form of Viṣṇu: "Even with respect to incarnation, his [Rāmānuja's] emphasis is not on the particular characteristics of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa but on their identity with God in His essential nature and supreme

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[11] *Śrī Bhāṣya* 2.2.42-43 acknowledges and defends Nārāyaṇa as the composer of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. In this section, Rāmānuja primarily uses *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (8.1.5-6) as a proof text. Rāmānuja, *The Vedānta Sūtras with the Śrī Bhāṣya of Rāmānujāchārya,* 3 vols, translated into English by M. Rangacharya and M.V. Varadaraja Aiyanger (Nungambakkam, Madras: The Educational Publishing Co., 1961, 1964, 1965).

[12] Neevel, Jr., *Yāmuna's Vedānta and Pāñcarātra*, pp. 17-28. The six qualities (*ṣaḍguṇas*), according to Pāñcarātra, are: *vīrya* (valor), *jñāna* (knowledge), *bala* (strength), *tejas* (splendour), *śakti* (power), and *aiśvarya* (sovereignty).

[13] See *Śrī Bhāṣya* 2.2.41ff. For further information on the role of Pāñcarātra in the Śrī-vaiṣṇava tradition, see Matsubara, *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās and Early Vaiṣṇava Theology*, pp. 39-40.

[14] According to Rāmānuja, the *svarūpa* (essential nature) of Brahman includes (1) *jñāna* (knowledge), (2) *ānanda* (bliss), (3) *ananta* (infiniteness), (4) *satya* (truth), and (5) *amalatva* (purity). See *Śrī Bhāṣya* 3.3.11-13. Rāmānuja uses *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.1; 2.5; 3.1; 3.6) and *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (3.3) as proof texts.

[15] Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja*, p. 92.

form".[16] In the section of the *Śrī Bhāṣya* wherein he defends the Pāñcarātra tradition, Rāmānuja specifically discusses only three of the five forms (*para, vyūha-avatāra, vibhava-avatāra*).[17]

As Katherine K. Young has clearly demonstrated, although Rāmānuja does not mention the Śrīvaiṣnava technical term for the worshippable iconic form of Viṣṇu (*arcā-avatāra*)—the most beloved form of Viṣṇu in Śrīvaiṣṇavism—he does provide the scope for the concept in his commentary on *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.11. Therein, Rāmānuja created the theoretical framework for the concept of *arcā-avatāra*, holding that one of the purposes of God's incarnation is to enable devotees to directly perceive God. In his commentary on *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.7-9, Rāmānuja refers to *vibhava-avatāra* (although he did not use the term): God descends to earth at a time of need in order to re-establish the *dharma*. He describes God's births as unique and non-material.[18]

Rāmānuja provided the scope for the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of *arcā-avatāra* in several ways through his commentary on *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.11.[19] Firstly, Rāmānuja depicted God as One who shows Himself to His devotees who "keep on experiencing [Him], with their own eyes".[20] Secondly, he also described God's incarnational appearance as being the full presence of God including His essential nature (*svarūpa*), a crucial aspect of Śrīvaiṣṇava spirituality. This act of God revealing Himself to His devotees is understood as an expression of His love—His gracious condescension (*sauśilya*)—wherein He makes Himself accessible to His devotees for their welfare. Finally, he implicitly differentiated *arcā-avatāra* from *vibhava-avatāra* in respect of the appearances of God which are not limited to specific times and places.[21]

Sectarian theological tenets became more prominent in the writings of the Ācāryas after Rāmānuja, such as his immediate disciples Kūreśa and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. Although Rāmānuja's immediate disciples employed their Ācārya's

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[16] Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja*, p. 181.

[17] Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja*, pp. 179-181. The *Nitya Grantha* manual of home worship includes the five forms but there is dispute over the authorship of the text.

[18] Katherine K. Young, "Beloved Places (*ukantuḷinanilaṅkaḷ*): The Correlation of Topography and Theology in the Śrī Vaiṣṇava Tradition of South India" (Ph.D. Dissertation; Montreal: McGill University, 1978), pp. 150-155.

[19] Young, "Beloved Places", pp. 150-155; Katherine K. Young, "Rāmānuja on *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.11: The Issue of *Arcāvatāra*", *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 23 (Summer, Fall 1988), pp. 92-95.

[20] *Gītā Bhāṣya* 4.11. Rāmānuja, *The Gītābhāṣya of Rāmānuja* (translation by M.R. Sampatkumaran) (Bombay: Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, 1985).

[21] Young, "Rāmānuja on *Bhagavadgītā* 4.11", pp. 95-104.

philosophical theology, they synthesized its tenets with the Tamil Veda.[22] The simple concept of *prapatti* (salvific self-surrender to God) became a key Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine by the time of the early Ācāryas, and is regarded as the preferred and easiest means to *mokṣa*. For Śrīvaiṣṇavas, after the performance of *prapatti*, the devotee's actions are all to be performed in the total service of God and, ideally at least, the devotee—God's servant —experiences the continual enjoyment of His presence. Salvation, granted by divine grace alone, is open to all, regardless of caste or gender. Following Rāmānuja's 'blueprint' for the iconic form of God, the concept of *arcā-avatāra* was explicitly developed and elaborated by these later Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas.

1.1. *Topotheism:*
The Śrīvaiṣṇava Worship of the Various Forms of Viṣṇu at Specific Places

Max Müller developed the concept of *henotheism* (Greek: *heis* 'one' and *theos* 'god') with regards to Vedic mythology; that is, each individual god is worshipped as Supreme, even though there is no defined relationship among the gods as superior or inferior. *Henotheism* also pertains to the worship of one deity among several as the special god of one's family, clan, or tribe.[23] The concept of *henotheism* differs from *polytheism* (Greek: *polus* 'many', *theos* 'god'), which is the worship of many gods at the same time, and *monotheism* (Greek: *mono* 'one', *theos* 'god') which is the worship of the one single God as Supreme. Müller believed that *henotheism* represented an unsystematic stage in the development of religion, arising along with *polytheism*, before the 'more sophisticated' phase of *monotheism*.[24]

According to R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, *henotheism* "to a lesser degree is evident in *bhakti*".[25] The concept of *henotheism* may also be applied to Śrīvaiṣṇavism in one sense, based on the fact that there are various forms worshipped as Supreme. However, there is a basic discontinuity between *henotheism* and Śrīvaiṣṇava theology. *Henotheism* refers to the worship of

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[22] Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 78-92.

[23] Müller uses *henotheism* interchangeably with *kathenotheism* (*kat-hena* 'one by one'), which expresses more precisely the *ṚgVedic* practice of the worship of one god at a time as Supreme. F. Max Müller, *The Vedas* (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1969), p. 85.

[24] Friedrich Max Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Indian Religion* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1879), p. 276.

[25] R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Polytheism", *Encyclopedia of Religions*, Vol 11, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), p. 439.

each individual god as Supreme. On the contrary, in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, the Supreme all-pervasive (*vibhu*) Lord Viṣṇu assumes at different and particular places a wide variety of forms—each with the same theological status of the Supreme. I call this phenomenon *topotheism* (Greek: *topos* 'locus', *theos* 'god'). Indeed, *topotheism* conceptualizes the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of God in terms of (1) the forms that God takes at specific locales, (2) the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological understanding of the equality of these many forms, and (3) the equality between the different forms with the transcendent God of Vaikuṇṭha.

According to the Śrīvaiṣṇava and late Pāñcarātra texts[26], there are five forms of God; interestingly all are related to specific regions or places: (1) *para*—Viṣṇu, the transcendent God, who resides in the Supreme Heaven of Vaikuṇṭha; (2) *vyūha-avatāra*—Viṣṇu's four-fold aggregate of cosmic emanations (Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha), associated with the Milk Ocean;[27] (3) *antaryāmin*—Viṣṇu, the Inner Controller, who dwells within all of creation and especially within the human heart; (4) *vibhava-avatāra*—Viṣṇu, who dwells on earth in specific times and at specific places as a human, animal, or animal-headed incarnation (e.g., Rāma at Ayodhya, Kṛṣṇa at Vṛndāvana); and, lastly, (5) *arcā-avatāra*—Viṣṇu, as the fully-incarnate God present in a properly consecrated icon in temples and home shrines.[28] For Śrīvaiṣṇavas, these five forms reflect the increasing accessibility of Lord Viṣṇu. The most popular, worshippable, and preferred form of Viṣṇu among Śrīvaiṣṇavas is the *arcā-avatāra*—Viṣṇu as a local icon—because it is accessible to all, unlimited by specific times or places.[29]

The notion of sacred space has been discussed by Mircea Eliade. In his study of mythology and religion, Eliade uses the term *axis mundi* (centre of the world) for religious conceptions and cosmological images that connect the profane world with the sacred, breaking the homogeneity of space, and, thus, creating 'sacred space'.[30] This 'sacred space', the connecting point at

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[26] *Sātvata Saṃhitā* 9; *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* 5; *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* 13; *Lakṣmī Tantra* 10 and 11.

[27] The *vyūha-avatāras* are associated with the Milk Ocean—the cosmic boundary of *saṃsāra* (the transitory world of birth, death, and rebirth).

[28] "What is called *arcā-avatāra* is that special form which, without remoteness of space and time, accepts for its body substance chosen by the devotees, and descends into it with a non-material body." Śrīnivadāsa, *Yatīndramatadīpika*, translated and with notes by Swami Adidevananda (Mylapore, Madras: Śrī Rūmakrishna Math, n.d.), 9.27.

[29] *Tattvatraya* 97. *The Tattvatraya of Lokācārya: A Treatise on Viṣiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* (translation by B.M. Awasthi and C.K. Datta (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973).

[30] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane, The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 37-39.

which one in this-world is linked to the sacred or transcendent, is regarded as the 'centre of the world'. The concept *axis mundi* is dissimilar from *topotheism* because the *arcā-avatāra* is not 'connecting' the sacred and the profane, nor is it regarded as the 'centre of the world'. Rather, each *arcā-avatāra* is the full presence of God on earth, so that there are innumerable 'centres' in a multiplicity of places.

The relation between Viṣṇu and His iconic manifestations (*arcā-avatāra*) has been discussed by various scholars of South Indian religion, drawing on the poems of the Ālvārs and Śrīvaiṣṇava literature. Although the icon-centred spirituality of the Ālvārs was not developed by them into a full-blown theological system, it became so with the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas, who conceptualized it in the theological term *arcā-avatāra*. In tracing the conception of the divine in the *caṅkam*, Ālvār, and Śrīvaiṣṇava literatures, Katherine K. Young refers to the development of 'terrestrial beloved places', which are the special places within *saṃsāra* where God takes a special iconic form so that He may be seen by His devotees.[31] That this form of Viṣṇu (His incarnation in an icon) is a 'full form' of Viṣṇu, implied in the Ālvār poems, is well established in Śrīvaiṣṇava theology. And, indeed, even the various places Viṣṇu has appeared in His *arcā* form are of equal status. As Young has written:

> At the outset let us state that we are speaking about popularity, not about any qualitative difference that assigns a hierarchy to the terrestrial Beloved Places. It is a case of favouritism. Though the Śrī Vaiṣṇava acknowledges that those places where God in His *arcā* form and the devotees meet have equal theological status, they are partial to those places about which the Ālvārs sang and especially Śrī Raṅkam, Veṅkaṭam, Kāñcī, and Tirunārāyaṇapuram.[32]

Vasudha Narayanan refers to the Ālvār and Śrīvaiṣṇava devotion to God at specific sites as a 'territorial theology'.[33] Finally, Nancy Ann Nayar sheds further light on the relationship between the Supreme and the *arcā-avatāra* made evident in the praise-poems written by Rāmānuja's immediate disciples Kūreśa and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. In her analysis of the praise-poems of Kūreśa, Nayar demonstrates how Kūreśa, in his synthesis of the Sanskrit Vedas and the 'Tamil Vedas' (i.e., *Divya Prabandham*), establishes the equality of the *para*, *antaryāmin*, and *arcā-avatāra* forms of Viṣṇu. Kūreśa does so by combining, in Sanskrit, Rāmānuja's phraseology describing the essential

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[31] Young, "Beloved Places", p. 12.
[32] Young, "Beloved Places", p. 107.
[33] Narayanan, *The Way and the Goal*, pp. 33-39.

nature of the Supreme with a variety of epithets for local deities praised by
the Āḻvārs (including Nammāḻvār, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, and Āṇṭāḷ).[34] Nayar
explains this development of the *equality of the forms of Viṣṇu* thus:

> Kūreśa develops the linkage between the fullness of the Supreme Brahman as
> transcendent God and His incarnation in the temple icon by establishing the
> parity or equality of these two locales of Viṣṇu: Vaikuṇṭha and the terrestrial
> sacred place called Vanagiri.[35]

Topotheism conceptualizes both the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of God in
terms of all the five forms that God takes at specific locales, including the
preferred *arcā* form of God, as well as reflects the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological
understanding of the equality of these many forms. And it is through the
understanding of *topotheism* that we see the development of Hayagrīva's
status as the full form of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, particularly evident in the
later Śrīvaiṣṇava depictions of Hayagrīva. Because the Śrīvaiṣṇava *sampra-
dāya* is centred in South India and it regards the Tamil hymns of the Āḻvārs
as scripture, it is to the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, which contains several
early references to Hayagrīva, that we now turn.

2. EARLY DEPICTIONS OF HAYAGRĪVA IN TAMIL NADU

2.1. *Hayagrīva in the Hymns of the Āḻvārs*

Continuous with the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, all references to Hayagrīva in the Āḻvār
hymns depict Him as a benevolent *vibhava-avatāra* of Viṣṇu, without any
mention of how Viṣṇu happened to gain a horse- head (as in *Skanda Purāṇa*
and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*). Furthermore, the Āḻvār depictions of Hayagrīva
specifically identify the Lords of Naṅkūr and Tiruvaḻuntūr with Hayagrīva
(the presiding deities at two local temple sites) among other of Viṣṇu's
vibhava-avatāras. Two of the Āḻvārs, Nammāḻvār (ca. 700 C.E.) and
Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār (ca. late 700 C.E.), mention Hayagrīva in their *Tiruvāymoḻi*
and *Periya Tirumoḻi*, respectively.[36] Hayagrīva is recognized as an *avatāra* of

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[34] Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 123-131; see the entire chapter 'Parity with *Para*', pp.
105-138.

[35] Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 123-124.

[36] Nammāḻvār (ca. 700 C.E.) is from the Pāṇḍya region of South India. He is the author
of *Tiruvāymoḻi*—the most important work contained in the *Divya Prabandham*. Tirumaṅkai
Āḻvār (ca. late 700 C.E.) is from the Naṅkūr district of South India. Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*,
pp. 267-269.

Viṣṇu in listings composed by these two Āḻvārs. He is referred to as *mā* (horse) and *parimuka* (horse-faced one).[37]

In *Tiruvāymoḻi* II.8.5, Nammāḻvār includes the horse (*mā*) in a list of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*:

> The Supreme Lord, Tirttan,
>   the Causeless Cause of the flowing universe,
>   its Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer,
>   Chief of the Celestials,
> descended as
> a horse (*mā*), a tortoise (*āmai*), a fish (*keṇṭai*), and a man (*perumāṉ*),
>   and protected all the worlds.

Nammāḻvār depicts Hayagrīva as the full form of God who came to earth in the form of a horse. Here we see the implicit parity between the *para* and the *vibhava-avatāra* forms of God.

Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār also refers to Viṣṇu's horse-headed incarnation in his listing of the Supreme's various incarnations contained in *Periya Tirumoḻi*:

> The One who becomes
> a fish (*keṇṭai*), a dwarf (*kuṟaḷ*),
> a goose (*puḷ*)[38], a boar (*keḻal*),
> a lion (*ari*) and a horse (*mā*),
> who is also the cosmic egg, the sun and the moon,
> who is all other things and is my God,
> stays in Naṅkūr where the powerful people
> are able to defeat the Pāṇḍya and Cōḻa kings.

Here, there is the identification of the horse-headed Viṣṇu with the Lord of Naṅkūr. The Āḻvār's list is almost identical with that of *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.17.11, which contains a list of *avatāras* beginning with the various earlier animal forms that Viṣṇu has taken in order to preserve the world, including the fish, the tortoise, the boar, the horse, and the lion. The only difference between Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār's list and that of *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*'s is that the Āḻvār's list also includes the goose (*puḷ*).[39]

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[37] *Periya Tirumoḻi* 5.3.2; *Periya Tirumoḻi* 7.8.2. *Pari* in Tamil means 'horse'. *Muka* (Sanskrit *mukha*) 'means face'. *Madras Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. IV, p. 2561.

[38] *Puḷ* literally means 'fowl or a kind of bird' *Madras Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. V, p. 2795.

[39] Although the goose (*puḷ*) form of Viṣṇu is found in the *Mahābhārata*, the goose (*haṃsa*) is not included in the many Purāṇic *avatāric* listings surveyed in this study (e.g., *Agni Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). In fact, the goose incarnation is more commonly found in the Āgamic listings. Several of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas list the goose (*vihaṅgama*) as one of the forms of Viṣṇu (*Sātvata Saṃhitā* 9.78; *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* 5; *Viṣaksena Saṃhitā* 13; *Lakṣmī Tantra* 11.19-20). Interestingly, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār appears here to have been directly

The following two stanzas on Hayagrīva by Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār are the only references in the *Divya Prabandham* which mention the mythic act of Hayagrīva's recovery of the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaṭaibha. In *Periya Tirumoḻi* 5.3.2, Hayagrīva is described as having the form of the Vedas; in the same stanza a reference is made to Brahmā, who is said to have lost the Vedas:

> Once upon a time,
> the One who,
> taking the form of a horse-faced one (*parimuka*)
> gave the attractive sounding Vedas
> to Brahmā (Aya<u>n</u>) who,
>   appearing at the navel of the compassionate Lord,
> lost the Vedas.

In *Periya Tirumoḻi* 7.8.2, Tirumaṅkai explicitly praises Hayagrīva for his glorious act of saving the universe by recovering the Vedas:

> Please look at the Supreme, our Lord,
> who once upon a time took the form of a Horse-faced being (*parimuka*)
> and recovered the four Vedas
>   [from the demons who]
>   brought darkness to the universe.
>
> The one who dwells in this place
> known as Taṇiyaḻūntūr (Tiruvaḻūntūr),
>   surrounded by [the fields of] superior quality paddy
>   which is blowing like whisks [in the wind],[40]
> has a goose (*puḷ*) as his feminine part
>   who enjoys the flowers of the fields.

Hayagrīva's act is here connected with a bountiful rice crop. This comparison is expressive of Hayagrīva's greatness, because rice is the most important staple crop in the Tamil lands. Most importantly, this passage brings out an implicit connection of Hayagrīva with an *arcā-avatāric* form of God who dwells in this place known as Tiruvaḻūntūr.

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influenced by the Āgamic tradition.
   [40] The whisk is one of the symbols of a king.

2.2. *Hayagrīva in the* Bhāgavata Purāṇa

As mentioned earlier in Chapter Three, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is an important Bhakti devotional text in Sanskrit, best known for its stories about the life of Kṛṣṇa, an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. According to recent scholarship, although the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* has been regarded at least since the 16th century as a pan-Indian Purāṇa, it is believed to have been composed in South India by a single author, who incorporated Āḻvār emotionalism into the text, during the formative years of Śrīvaiṣṇavism (ca. 9th-10th century C.E.).[41] Hayagrīva appears as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu not only in the Tamil hymns of the Āḻvārs, but also in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. This clearly demonstrates that Hayagrīva's presence in the South is not limited to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition (although he is most popular therein).

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* provides three different lists of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*. Two of these lists that include Hayagrīva are: a list of twenty-two (1.3.1-25) and a list of twenty-three *avatāras* (2.1-38). The third list, incorporating ten *avatāras* (10.40.17-22) does not include Hayagrīva. Neither of the two lists which mention Hayagrīva in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* conform exactly to the listings of *avatāras* given in the Āḻvār hymns. In contrast to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the hymns of the Āḻvārs, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* contains myths about both the malevolent and the benevolent Hayagrīva from the Purāṇic tradition. In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5.18.1-6, 7.9.37 and 11.4.17, Hayagrīva is depicted as a god and is praised for His act of recovering the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Yet, a horse-headed being is at the same time portrayed in *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8.24.7-57 as a malevolent demon; Viṣṇu assumed the form of a fish in order to save the Vedas from this horse-headed demon.

Even though the mythic stories in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are primarily Vaiṣṇava, the text is heavily influenced by an *advaitic* world-view[42] which, as argued previously, would allow for ambivalent depictions of Hayagrīva. From a philosophical viewpoint, therefore, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* can comfortably contain the two separate stories of horse-headed figures—the benevolent and the malevolent. Significantly, however, the text does not contain any story that synthesizes the two horse-headed figures (as do the Śākta Purāṇas, *Devībhāgavata* and *Kālikā*). Although the association of a demonic character with a form similar to the benevolent *avatāra* of Viṣṇu

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[41] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 486-488.

[42] Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, pp. 494-497. Based on his rigorous study of Prahlāda myths, Hacker noted the *advaitin* orientation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, even though it was not identical to any *advaitin* philosophical system. Hacker, *Prahlāda, Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*, pp. 126.

would be highly problematic for Śrīvaiṣṇavas who hold that Viṣṇu is wholly taintless,[43] this would be philosophically less important for the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* because of its *advaitic* viewpoint in which all forms are considered to belong to the realm of *māyā*. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, therefore, can easily contain two different strands of the horse-headed figure. In other non-*advaitic* Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas (such as *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*) and in the Āḻvār hymns, however, the malevolent horse-headed demon is not even so much as mentioned! It would have been philosophically and theologically impossible for the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the Āḻvār hymns to depict an *avatāra* of the wholly benevolent Viṣṇu as having a demonic past, or even to acknowledge another horse-headed figure, a form similar to the Supreme God, as demonic. For the Āḻvārs and Śrīvaiṣṇavas, *māyā* is Viṣṇu's wonderful, enjoyable and mysterious 'creation'. The affirmation of God's creation means that the forms which Viṣṇu takes are real, not illusory.

Hayagrīva was definitely known in Tamil Nadu before the theological development of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition (based on the references in the Āḻvār hymns and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). However, it is in Śrīvaiṣṇavism that we see the full development of Hayagrīva worship. The elevation of Hayagrīva's status and role in the Tamil milieu grows directly out of Śrīvaiṣṇava *topotheism*. Central to the Śrīvaiṣṇava conception of God generally, *topotheism* is particularly evident in the later Śrīvaiṣṇava depictions of Hayagrīva.

2.3. *Hayagrīva in the* Stotra *of an Early Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya*

Among the early Ācāryas who were the immediate companions of Rāmānuja, at least one, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar (ca. 12th century C.E.[44]), dedicates a stanza to the horse-headed God. In his *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava: The Latter Hundred Stanzas*, in praise of the Lord at Śrīraṅgam, Bhaṭṭar describes all the five forms of Viṣṇu. Stanza by stanza, Bhaṭṭar praises the many *vibhava-avatāric* forms of Viṣṇu: goose (v. 53), baby on a banyan leaf (v. 54), fish (vs. 60-62), tortoise (v. 62), boar (v. 63), man-lion (vs. 65-66), dwarf (v. 67), Rāma with an axe (v. 68), Balarāma (v. 70), Kṛṣṇa (v. 72), and Kalkin (v. 73). Significantly, among the stanzas in praise of Viṣṇu's *avatāric* forms is one that honours Hayagrīva:

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[43] *Śrī Bhāṣya* 3.2.5.20.
[44] Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 25-30.

O Possessor of [Sri]raṅgam!
Incarnated as a horse,
You destroyed the obstacles Madhu and Kaiṭabha,
bestowed upon Brahmā divine vision
  in the form of the Three [Vedas]
and gave life to the whole world
  freely and spontaneously! (v. 52)[45]

Although Bhaṭṭar makes reference to the myth about Hayagrīva who
recovered the Vedas from the demons, along the lines of the story related in
the *Mahābhārata* and the *Hayaśīrṣa Saṁhitā*, there is also an implicit
depiction of him as the full form of Viṣṇu in that He is identified with the
Lord at ŚrīRaṅgam—an *arcā-avatāra* of Viṣṇu. At the same time, the
Ācārya's poem evidences the phenomenon of *topotheism* in that, relating the
many forms of Viṣṇu to the icon at Śrīraṅgam that he praises, Bhaṭṭar
demonstrates the equality in theological status of the various forms of Viṣṇu.

Even though Hayagrīva appears both as a demon and as an *avatāra* of
Viṣṇu in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, neither the Tamil Āḻvārs nor Parāśara
Bhaṭṭar mention the Epic and Purāṇic stories of a demonic Hayagrīva who is
killed by Viṣṇu. The Āḻvārs and the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya are careful to
establish the horse-headed figure as wholly benevolent. Interestingly, neither
the Āḻvār hymns, nor the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, nor Bhaṭṭar's *Śrīrangaraja
Stava* mention how Hayagrīva became one with a horse-head (as in the
Hayagrīva passages in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*).
Nowhere is Hayagrīva linked to the Vedic myth of Dadhyañc. Since the
effort to establish Vedic legitimacy for all concepts in Śrīvaiṣṇavism is very
strong and pervasive in the literature,[46] one would think that the myth would
have been mentioned if it were at all credible to Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

The early depictions of Hayagrīva in the Āḻvār poems and in the praise-
poem of an early Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya are consistent in their reverence for, and
gratitude to, the wholly benevolent Hayagrīva. Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār's and
Bhaṭṭar's stanzas reflect *topotheism* in that the iconic incarnation present right
before them (whether it be the Lords of Tiruvaḻuntūr and Naṅkūr or the Lord
at ŚrīRaṅgam) can be identified with, and praised as, Hayagrīva. The two
chapters that follow will demonstrate how Śrīvaiṣṇava *topotheism* is the basis
of the development of the understanding of, and worship of, Hayagrīva in
South India. Indeed, in the short Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional hymns discussed in

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[45] Nancy Ann Nayar, *Praise-Poems to Viṣṇu and Śrī: The Stotras of Rāmānuja's Imme-
diate Disciples* (Bombay: Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, 1994), pp. 247-248.
[46] Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 16-18.

Chapter Seven, we will see that there is a reversal in the direction of identification of the iconic forms of Viṣṇu with Hayagrīva at Tiruvahīndrapuram, where Hayagrīva is praised as *para*, *antaryāmin* and *vibava-avatāra*.

3. CONCLUSION

There are references to Hayagrīva in the literature of South India prior to Vedānta Deśika in the Āḻvār hymns, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and Bhaṭṭar's *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava*. All of these references depict Hayagrīva as a benevolent *avatāra* of Viṣṇu who recovered the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Although Hayagrīva appears as both a demon and as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, neither the Āḻvārs nor Parāśara Bhaṭṭar mention the Epic and Purāṇic stories of a demonic horse-headed figure who is killed by Viṣṇu. The latter feature is due to the fact that the Āḻvār and the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya are careful to establish the horse-headed figure Hayagrīva as wholly benevolent. Likewise, there is no mention or concern in any of the texts as to how Hayagrīva became one with a horse-head (as in the Hayagrīva passages in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*). The absence of any interest in the etiology of His horse-head further reinforces the understanding that Hayagrīva is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, without the need for any explanation of His form.

Furthermore, *topotheism*, which conceptualizes the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of the five forms that God takes at five different locales, as well as the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological understanding of the equality of these many forms—evident in nascent form in *Periya Tirumoḻi*—was a well-established doctrine by the time of Bhaṭṭar's stanza in *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava*. Just as Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār equates the Lords of Naṅkūr and Tiruvaḻuntūr with Hayagrīva, Bhaṭṭar, too, identifies the many forms of Viṣṇu, including Hayagrīva, with the icon at Śrīraṅgam. As we will see, Vedānta Deśika and the later Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns explicitly describe Hayagrīva as a form with the same ontological status as Viṣṇu, whether in the heart or in the temple.

In this chapter, I have analysed the several references to Hayagrīva in the South Indian literature prior to Vedānta Deśika. However, Hayagrīva became more popular in Tamil Nadu only after Vedānta Deśika's experience of the grace of Hayagrīva and his composition of the *Hayagrīva Stotra*. The next two chapters reflect the Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional preference for the Supreme Viṣṇu's iconic-incarnations in specific places in the Tamil lands. It is in Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* that we see Hayagriva explicitly worshipped as

the Supreme Lord, whether as a *vibhava, antaryāmin*, or *arcā-avatāra* (Chapter Six). The worship of Hayagrīva as *arcā-avatāra* reached its full development in the establishment of the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram (Chapter Seven).

CHAPTER SIX

VEDĀNTA DEŚIKA'S *HAYAGRĪVA STOTRA*:
TOPOTHEISM AND THE LORD OF LIGHT AND LEARNING

The most celebrated text on Hayagrīva in the region of Tamil Nadu is the composition by the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Vedānta Deśika[1] (ca. 1268-1371 C.E.), the eminent theologian, philosopher, logician, and poet who resided in the town of Kāñcīpuram. The *Hayagrīva Stotra*—a thirty-two stanza Sanskrit poem in praise of Hayagrīva—reflects the religiosity of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. Vedānta Deśika writes in an emotional-devotional mood, typical of Śrīvaiṣṇava Bhakti poetry, even as he incorporates into the poem crucial theological tenets from Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta philosophy.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part of the chapter provides background material on Vedānta Deśika. It also assesses the historical and theological significance of the horse-headed *avatāra* in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The second part of the chapter consists of an analysis of Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*. This analytical section provides an overview of crucial theological themes of the poem; it demonstrates that Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva reflects *topotheism*—the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of God in terms of the many full forms that He takes in five specific locales or regions.

The third part of the chapter discusses the relationship of Vedānta Deśika's poem to the various religious streams discussed earlier in Part B (Epic, Purāṇic, Āgamic) and Chapter Five (Āḻvārs and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar). These religious streams are, of course, reflected in Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* depiction of Hayagrīva, but which elements Vedānta Deśika selects from the various streams and how he adapts and organizes them still remain to be understood. For that, we turn to the '*reverse-prismatic*' perspective, which is useful in comprehending the poet's particular depiction of Hayagrīva within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. Using the *reverse-prismatic* perspective, the analysis in the third part of the chapter demonstrates how the selected elements from the various streams are fused together and filtered by Deśika through the Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view contained in the

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[1] Vedānta Deśika is also known by the names of Vedāntācārya 'Preceptor of Vedānta' and Veṅkaṭanātha 'Lord of the Bell'.

stotra: Vedānta Deśika incorporates and carefully arranges elements from both the pan-Indian Sanskrit stream of religious literature and the Āḷvār emotional religion of grace, even as he unites them with features from the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.

Before preceding to the overview and analysis of the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, I provide below essential background material on the poet Vedānta Deśika himself.

1. VEDĀNTA DEŚIKA'S LIFE AND WORKS

1.1. *Life of Vedānta Deśika*

Vedānta Deśika was a philosopher-theologian in the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta philosophical school of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. The Vaṭakalai *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam (3000)*[2] records that he was born in 1268 C.E., into the Viśvāmitra *gotra*, in the Tuppil suburb of the important intellectual centre of Kāñcīpuram.[3] Vaṭakalai hagiography describes Vedānta Deśika as having had a sacred birth: Vedānta Deśika's father dreamt that he should take a trip to the pilgrimage town of Tirupati, while his mother dreamt that the goddess Padmavatī told her to visit her shrine—both in order to have a son. At Tirupati, Vedānta Deśika's mother saw Lord Veṅkaṭeśvara stand before her in the guise of a child and presented her with a bell. Because of

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[2] The *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam (6000)* (The Splendor of the Lineage of Spiritual Preceptors) is the earliest and the most popular collection of hagiographies among Teṉkalais. Following the pan-Indian genre of hagiography, the text is a mixture of fact and legend about the historical Ācāryas; that is, the descriptions of the Āḷvārs and Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas include supernatural births, miracles and so forth. It is written in Maṇipravāḷa ca. 12th to 13th century C.E. See Piṉpaḷakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar, *Āṟāyirapaṭi Kuruparamparāprapāvam* (Tirucci: Kiruṣṇasvāmi Ayyaṅkar, 1975). It is believed that, because of the Teṉkalai-Vaṭakalai split within Śrīvaiṣṇavism in the 18th century, the Vaṭakalai sect started a new version referred to as the Vaṭakalai *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam (3000)*, which includes an account of Vedānta Deśika's life.

[3] *Kuruparamparā Prapāvam of Brahmātantra Svatantra Jīyar* (edited by V.V. Kiṭambi Raṅkāchārya Svāmi (Ceṉṉapattanam: K. Ānantāchārya, n.d), pp. 94-95. Kāñcīpuram is a city in present-day Tamil Nadu. During Deśika's time, it was an important centre for philosophical discourse amongst the educated elite. Kāñcīpuram is associated with the Vaṭakalai school (Northern school); ŚrīRaṅgam is associated with the Teṉkalai school (Southern school). Kāñcīpuram remains an important Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage place even today. See Mumme, *The Śrīvaiṣṇava Theological Dispute*, pp. 6-9.

the vision, she named her son Veṅkaṭanātha ('Lord of the Bell'), after the main deity of the Tirupati Temple.[4]

During Vedānta Deśika's days as a student, when he was known as Veṅkaṭanātha, he attained mastery of the various Indian schools of philosophy and logic. His maternal uncle, Ātreya Rāmānuja—who is considered to be an incarnation of Garuḍa, the eagle-headed man who serves as Viṣṇu's vehicle—was his teacher. (Śrīvaiṣṇavas regard their Ācāryas as partial *avatāras* of Viṣṇu because their work is the establishment of *dharma* on earth.)

Soon after Vedānta Deśika finished his studies and began his career as a poet-logician, his teacher died, and he succeeded him as an Ācārya in Kāñcīpuram. During Vedānta Deśika's career as Ācārya, he became known as Vedāntācārya. Learned in both streams of *ubhaya-vedānta*—Tamil Vedas and the Sanskrit Vedas—and in the philosophic and poetic compositions of previous Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas, Vedānta Deśika wrote prolifically. During the middle period of his life (ca. 1325-1336 C.E.), he is said to have visited North India, including Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage places such as Dvāraka and Mathurā.[5] Disillusioned by the presence of Islamic power, the weakness of Hinduism, and the hypocrisy of the *brahmin* priests, he returned to Kāñcīpuram in Tamil Nadu and then toured South India. Vaṭakalai hagiography, which in legendary rather than historical fashion establishes the Śrīvaiṣṇava *guruparamparā* through Vedānta Deśika,[6] claims that it is during the time he spent in ŚrīRaṅgam that he engaged in a theological dispute with the Ācāryas who resided there. After a life of teaching, preaching and writing, he died, according to tradition, on November 14, 1369 C.E.[7]

A legend, which is probably based on historical events, holds that Vedānta Deśika had a close association with Tiruvahīndrapuram (South Arcot district),

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[4] Tirupati is a town in present-day Andhra Pradesh that is the site of a popular Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage place. The icon in the temple's main shrine is of Veṅkaṭeśvara, who is worshipped primarily for worldly boons, such as prosperity.

[5] Dvāraka is a Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage place in present-day Gujarat. It is built near an ancient city associated with Kṛṣṇa which, according to the Purāṇas, was submerged in the sea. See L.V. Gopalan, *Śrī Vaiṣṇava Divya Deśams (108 Tiruppatis)* (Madras: Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha, 1972), p. 89. Mathurā is an important pilgrimage place for the devotees of Kṛṣṇa in present-day Uttar Pradesh. The activities of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* (cowherdesses) took place in Mathurā and the surrounding areas, such as Vṛndāvana.

[6] In the 18th century, during the time of tension over the control of temple administration, the differences between the two *guruparamparās* became sharper. Venkatachari, *The Maṇipravāḷa Literature of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas*, pp. 164-166.

[7] Satyavrata Singh, *Vedānta Deśika: His Life, Works and Philosophy* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1958), p. 29.

where he went to pursue his career as an Ācārya.[8] It is during his sojourn there that he is said to have written the *Hayagrīva Stotra*.[9] Even today, anyone who visits Tiruvahīndrapuram is shown the seat where Vedānta Deśika is said to have composed, and then recited, the *stotra* before an icon of Hayagrīva. Recitation of the *stotra* has been incorporated into the temple ritual during the annual *brahmā-utsava* (annual Hindu temple festival) in Tiruvahīndrapuram.[10] Vedānta Deśika's favourite place is said to have been Auṣadhagiri (Mount Cappar), where he is said to have meditated upon the Garuḍa mantra (as mentioned earlier, his teacher was regarded as the incarnation of Garuḍa) and received the grace of Hayagrīva. Around 1667 C.E., a Hayagrīva temple was built at Auṣadhagiri in memory of Vedānta Deśika and his experience of Hayagrīva's grace.[11] Whether based on historical fact or not, this association of Vedānta Deśika with Tiruvahīndrapuram is central to the worship of Hayagrīva there and in the Śrīvaiṣṇava community generally.

1.2. *Vedānta Deśika's Religious Thought and Works*

Vedānta Deśika lived two and a half centuries after Yāmuna (11th century C.E.) and two centuries after Rāmānuja (11th-12th century C.E.)—the two Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas who are revered as the founders of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta philosophy. Vedānta Deśika himself professed the philosophical and theological tenets of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedanta school. Although he followed the Śrīvaiṣṇava sectarian tenet of *prapatti*—the simple surrender to God who, out of His grace, saves His devotee—as the superior path to *mokṣa*, Vedānta Deśika offered a new understanding of *prapatti* that became very important in the subsequent development of the Vaṭakalai sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. He argued that salvation is not completely effortless; rather, one must perform prescribed religious acts to attain it. He maintained that Vedic education should be

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[8] *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam of Brahmātantra Svatantra Jīyar*, pp. 94-103; Singh, *Vedānta Deśika*, p. 98.

[9] Information given by T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar in an interview on January 24, 1997 at the home of T.K. Piran at Tiruvahīndrapuram, Tamil Nadu. See Chapter Seven for autobiographical information about the informants.

[10] From an interview with temple priests T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997. For information about the *brahma-utsava* festival, see 'Rituals at the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple, Tiruvahīndrapuram' in Chapter Seven.

[11] From an interview with temple priests T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997. For more information about the Hayagrīva temple, see 'Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram' in Chapter Seven.

mandatory for *dvija*[12] males, particularly *brahmins*. Thus, Vedānta Deśika's concept of *prapatti* differed somewhat from the more 'radical' understanding of surrender that was formulated by the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Maṇavālamāmuni who, following the approach contained in Yāmuna's *Stotra Ratna*, established the view of *prapatti* accepted by Teṇkalais. Vedānta Deśika, and the Ācāryas of the later Vaṭakalai sect, promulgated the view that salvation is dependent upon *prapatti*, but that it necessarily includes the performance of rituals of *prapatti*, as prescribed by the Supreme Lord in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.[13]

In general, Vedānta Deśika viewed *prapatti* as the preferred path to salvation and knowledge of God; however, he creatively integrated elements from the Vedas and Āgamas, making *prapatti* into a more complex and ritualized act. Continuous with the thought of Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika preserved the Vedantic conception of the soul's nature; that is, the soul's inherent nature is governed by *kartṛtva* and *bhoktṛtva*—*jīva's* (soul's) capacities as agent and enjoyer, respectively. According to Vedānta Deśika, *śeṣatva* (subservience) refers only to the relationship between the soul and the Lord and is not a description of the soul's essential nature (*svarūpa*), as taught by the Teṇkalais.[14]

Although Vedānta Deśika provided Vedic legitimacy to *prapatti*, in the

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[12] The classical Hindu *varṇa* (colour) system contains four classes: (1) the *brahmin* (priestly) class, (2) the *kṣatriya* (warrior) class, (3) the *vaiśya* (agricultural) class, and lastly (4) the *śūdra* (serving) class. The first three are categorized as *dvija* (twice-born), to whom the Vedas and Vedic education are accessible. The *śūdra* class, on the other hand, is required to serve all those belonging to the *dvija* classes, and is forbidden to have any Vedic education. Furthermore, women, no matter which class they are born into, have the status of *śūdra* males; that is, women are denied Vedic education and, thus, salvation in their present birth.

[13] Maṇavālamāmuni (b.1370) is the revered Ācārya of what came to be known as the Teṇkalai (Southern) School of ŚrīRaṅgam which placed importance upon analogies and popular legends in order to capture the attention of the common people. A gap thus developed between the thought of Maṇavālamāmuni and that of Deśika; however, neither saw himself as belonging to a separate sect within Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition divided into two distinct sects only in the 17th-18th century. Mumme, *The Śrīvaiṣṇava Theological Dispute*, pp. 2-3. The common analogies used to compare the Vaṭakalai sect's concept of *prapatti* with the Teṇkalai school's view on salvation are the monkey and the cat, respectively. The relationship that the baby animal has with its mother parallels the relationship a devotee has with God. For the Vaṭakalai school, the baby 'monkey' must grip the mother's fur as it is carried, just as some effort must be made by the devotee to obtain God's grace. In contrast, the Teṇkalai 'kitten' is carried by the mother's mouth by the gripping of its neck, implying that absolutely no effort other than self-surrender upon the part of the devotee is required for salvation.

[14] Mumme, *The Śrīvaiṣṇava Theological Dispute*, pp. 60-68.

process of doing so he gave importance to action (*karma*) and effort, for he suggested that the relationship between God and the devotee requires effort upon the part of the devotee. This concept of ritual action (*karma*) by Vedic injunction is central to the Mimāṃsāka school and orthodox *bhakti-yoga*. Whether Vedānta Deśika intended it or not, this particular interpretation served to reinforce the important theological, ritual, and social role of the *brahmins*.

Regarding the nature of the Divine, Vedānta Deśika demonstrated how the two aspects of divine nature—mercy and autonomy—operate together harmoniously. Because he realized the potential for contradiction, Vedānta Deśika asserted that the Lord expresses both His mercy and supreme autonomy in creating and maintaining the *karmic* order and the limited autonomy of individual souls. This stance on the interrelation and harmony between mercy and autonomy, according to Patricia Mumme, (1) protects the Vedāntic conceptions of God and soul, (2) preserves the value of the Śāstras, and (3) supports the Lord's supremacy, the egalitarian mercy that He has chosen to manifest in His role as the judge of *karma*.[15]

During Vedānta Deśika's long career as a theologian-logician, he wrote in three languages: Sanskrit, Tamil and the synthetic language of Maṇipravāḷa.[16] His Maṇipravāḷa works are often written in combination with other languages; along with Maṇipravāḷa, he writes in 'pure' Tamil and Sanskrit within a single text (e.g., *Rahasya Traya Sāra* [*The Essence of the Three Secrets*]). This work—his *magnum opus*—is a detailed summary of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology. The three Śrīvaiṣṇava *rahasyas* (secrets, mantras) discussed are: (1) *tiru-mantra*; (2) *dvaya-mantra*; and (3) *carama-śloka*. Although, as the title suggests, the text concerns the three Śrīvaiṣṇava mantras, the treatise covers all the major tenets of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, including Śrī's role as intercessor.[17]

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[15] Mumme, *The Śrīvaiṣṇava Theological Dispute*, pp. 211-221.

[16] Maṇipravāḷa is a literary language that emerged ca. 12th-15th century C.E. It consists of "Tamil words interspersed with Sanskrit words even as ruby and coral are strung together alternately in a necklace." There is an intermixture of Sanskrit stems and roots (there are no Sanskrit noun or verb endings) and Tamil grammar. In Śrīvaiṣṇavism, Maṇipravāḷa is always used for prose literature. See Venkatachari, *The Maṇipravāḷa Literature of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas*, pp. 4-5.

[17] Vedānta Deśika, *Rahasyatrayasāra* (translation by M.R. Rajagopala Ayyangar) (Kumbakonam: Agnihotram Ramanuja Thatachariar, 1956).

(1) "*Oṃ*, Salutations to Nārāyaṇa [Viṣṇu]" (*Oṃ namo nārāyaṇāya*). (2) "I take refuge with the feet of Nārāyaṇa [Viṣṇu], who is the Possessor of Śrī" (*śrīmān nārāyaṇa caraṇau, śaraṇam prapadye, śrīmate nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*). (3) *Bhagavad Gītā* 18.66: "Having relinquished all *dharmas* (duties/rites), take refuge with me only. I will liberate you from all sins. Do not grieve." (*sarva dharmān parityajya, mām ekam śaraṇam vraja. ahaṃ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi, mā sucaḥ*).

Besides his *Rahasya Traya Sāra*, Vedānta Deśika wrote extensively in various literary genres: *stotras*, such as *Devanāyaka Pañcāśat* (*Fifty [stanzas] [in Praise of] Devanātha*); epics, such as *Haṃsa Sandeśa* (*The Messenger Goose*); religious manuals, such as *Pāñcarātra Raksa* (*The Defence of Pāñcarātra*); philosophical treatises, such as *Śata Dūṣaṇi* (*One Hundred Refutations*); and commentaries, such as *Stotra Ratna Bhāṣya* (*Commentary on the Jewel of Praise-poems*).

Vedānta Deśika placed importance upon the Vedic tradition within Śrīvaiṣṇava devotionalism. Consequently, his writings are geared towards two different audiences: (1) the pan-Indian scholars and *brahmin* priests, for whom he writes in Sanskrit, with proof texts from the Vedas (for example, *Pāñcarātra Rakṣā* [Defence of Pāñcarātra]); and (2) the larger Śrīvaiṣṇava community of ordinary Tamil-speaking people, for whom he writes in the vernacular languages of Tamil and Maṇipravāḷa. Some of his compositions have a strong Āḻvār devotional-emotional tone, for example, *Dehalīśa Stuti* (*Praise Poem to the Lord of the Porch*). Other compositions have a strong Pāñcarātric esoteric-ritual bent, such as the above mentioned *Rahasya Traya Sāra*.

1.3. *The Historical and Theological Significance of the* Hayagrīva Stotra

The *Hayagrīva Stotra* draws on both the Vedic tradition—restricted to twice-born males or, more often, only to *brahmin* males—and the universal religion of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, in which salvation, open to all, is dependent on the grace of God. It would seem that this dual emphasis in Vedānta Deśika preserves the pre-eminent position of the priestly class, even when articulated within the context of the Śrīvaiṣṇava notion of grace.

Hayagrīva Stotra is significant in that its imagery (the recovery of the Vedas by an incarnation of Viṣṇu) mirrors the importance that Vedānta Deśika himself gives to Vedic education and the Vedic tradition. Although Vedānta Deśika's disillusionment with the disintegration of Hinduism, particularly the hypocrisy of the *brahmin* priests and the downplaying of traditional Sanskrit education, probably occurred after he had composed the *stotra*, it apparently only reinforced an already present appreciation of the Vedas and high regard for the Sanskritic tradition. Furthermore, the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, because it is in Sanskrit, can be seen as pan-Indian in terms of its genre and language; indeed, the regional use of Sanskrit to depict a deity popular in a local region serves to make the local understanding of the deity accessible to a pan-Indian audience. This phenomenon will be further highlighted in Chapter Seven.

The poem on Hayagrīva is thought to have been written early in Vedānta

Deśika's life. It seems that he had apparently already determined that Śrīvaiṣṇavas were marginalizing the Vedic tradition with their radical interpretation of doctrines like *prapatti*. He therefore believed in the need for a corrective by way of a renewed appreciation for the Sanskritic-Vedic side of the tradition. Consequently, Vedānta Deśika's original purpose would seem to have been to restore the balance between the Tamil and Sanskrit Vedas within *ubhaya-vedānta* by re-emphasizing the Sanskrit side, even as he restored the balance between grace and action. This view must certainly have been reinforced after his trip to the north. Lastly, Vedānta Deśika's attraction to the Hayagrīva God can be interpreted in the light of the religio-political climate of India at the time (Islamic rule). Indeed, the deity who saved the Vedas from the demons can also be understood as a metaphor for the political situation, wherein the Vedas needed to be rescued from the 'demons'—the Muslims.

Vedānta Deśika was a great Sanskrit philosopher-poet who seems to have favoured poetry for the expression of his personal devotion to God. As we can see in *Hayagrīva Stotra,* Vedānta Deśika's poetic works are expressions of deep religious emotion combined with the theological tenets of Śrīvaiṣṇava devotionalism. Concerning the poetry of Vedānta Deśika, Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat has stated:

> In fact doctrine and poetry are not here distinguishable, are not in relation of a body of philosophical thoughts [to] its literary ornamentation. They are blended together. The doctrine is a conception of the world rooted in a feeling of man's submissiveness and love towards God, which feeling has a natural emotive appeal, and the expression of which is spontaneously literary expression being dependent only on the authenticity of the description.[18]

2. ANALYSIS OF VEDĀNTA DEŚIKA'S *HAYAGRĪVA STOTRA*

2.1. *Theological Themes in* Hayagrīva Stotra

The *Hayagrīva Stotra* consists of thirty-two stanzas, written in Sanskrit, in the *upajāti* (mixed) metre. The names of Hayagrīva found in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* are: Haya-grīva 'Horse-necked One' (vs. 1, 5); Haya-vadana 'Horse-faced One' (vs. 2, 3); and Vāji-vaktra 'Horse-faced One' (v. 4). Epithets of Hayagrīva contained in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* are: Lord, God, Incarnation of Vāsudeva (v. 4); Expounder of the Vedas (v. 4); Lord of speech (vs. 4, 12, 32); Treasury of

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[18] Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat, Vedānta Deśika *Varadarājapañcāśat* (Bombay: Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, 1990), p. ix.

speech (v. 8); King Goose[19] (v. 14); all-pervading God (v. 25); and the glorious and sinless One (v. 32). The poem especially praises and depicts Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning. Hayagrīva is described as the divine light that is both the goal of, and the means to, the knowledge of God.

The important theological themes contained in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* are: (1) the essential nature of God (*svarūpa*); (2) the nuances of Hayagrīva as *avatāra*; and (3) the nature of devotion (Bhakti).

2.1.1. *The Svarūpa of Hayagrīva*

For Vedānta Deśika, as for Śrīvaiṣnavism in general, Hayagrīva is a full *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. In Śrīvaiṣṇavism, there exists the category of *aṃśa-avatāra* (*aṃśa* 'small or minute portion'). *Aṃśa-avatāra,* sometimes referred to as 'partial incarnation', specifically refers to the incarnations of an attribute or an emblem associated with Viṣṇu. Examples of some *aṃśa-avatāras* are Sudarśana (the incarnation of Viṣṇu's discus), Viṣṇu's vehicle (the bird Garuḍa), and Kapila. However, in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, Vedānta Deśika describes Hayagrīva as "having the form of knowledge and bliss" (v. 1)—the fundamental attributes of Viṣṇu's essential nature (*svarūpa*)—and this clearly establishes Hayagrīva as a full incarnation of God. *Jñāna* (knowledge) and *ānanda* (bliss) are not only two of the five defining attributes of God (the other three being *satya* 'true being', *anantatva* 'infiniteness', and *amalatva* 'taintlessness'), but are also regarded as the fundamental attributes identifying the 'whatness' of Brahman.[20] Furthermore, *jñāna* and *ānanda* are often used as a shorthand list implicitly referring to all five qualities, i.e., Brahman's *svarūpa*. Because the Śrīvaiṣṇava depictions of Hayagrīva recognize Him as having the full form of Viṣṇu, Hayagrīva cannot be viewed as an *aṃśa-avatāra* (partial incarnation); rather, for Śrīvaiṣṇavas He is a 'full' incarnation of the Lord.

Hayagrīva is not only described as having the form of *jñāna* and *ānanda*, but also as granting these auspicious qualities to His devotees (vs. 5, 6, 7). Through Hayagrīva's grace, His devotees attain wisdom and experience bliss. Throughout the praise-poem, Hayagrīva is associated with knowledge and learning. He is described, for example, as the "Foundation of all learning" (v. 1), "an Ocean of knowledge" (vs. 3, 25), and the "Treasure of pure knowledge" (v. 5). Hayagrīva is said to be one "who has vowed to grant wisdom" (v. 5) and

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[19] For a discussion on the translation of *haṃsa* as goose, see Chapter Eight, note 15.
[20] See Carman, *Theology of Rāmānuja*, pp. 88-97, 111-112 and Lipner, *The Face of Truth*, pp. 80-81.

His light is "for the lotus of knowledge" (v. 21). It is by His grace that one is
able to know and speak the truth:

> On account of Your grace,
> may [You] decorate my heart
> with the truths,
>   which are luminous
>   which completely remove impurity and doubt
> [and] are undisturbed by fallacious reasonings. (v. 31)

Besides the description of Hayagrīva as having the *svarūpa* of Brahman and
granting *jñāna* and *ānanda* to His devotees, He is depicted as the creator (vs.
2, 3, 11, 12), protector (v. 22) and sustainer (vs. 3, 8, 9) of the worlds—key
functions belonging only to the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Moreover, Hayagrīva
further characterized as "the First Cause [of the universe]—before names and
forms" (v. 12), is also frequently described as creator, preserver and protector
of the Vedas—that is, of divine revelation (vs. 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 22, 23).

Hayagriva is acknowledged as the origin of the power of other gods:

> Even the speech of the renowned ones
> beginning with the image of lord Śiva facing south,
>   the goddess (Sarasvatī), the dutiful wife (of Brahmā) seated on a lotus
>   and Vyāsa,
> is brilliant
> because of the [mere] traces
>   of Your [extensive] power. (v. 7)

Again:

> O God [Hayagrīva]!
> Having removed
>   the oscillation of doubt,
> You establish Bṛhaspati
>   in truth/wisdom.
>
> Now, because of that,
> the empire of thirty gods[21]
> is untouched by vacillation. (v. 9)

Such passages establish Hayagrīva as none other than the Supreme God who
has power over all other gods, including Brahmā and Śiva.

It is interesting to note that, although Hayagrīva is depicted in Śrīvaiṣṇavism

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[21] Thirty gods (*tridaśeśvarāṇām*) are under Bṛhaspati.

as a 'full' incarnation of the Lord, Vedānta Deśika never describes Hayagrīva as accompanied by His consort Śrī (Lakṣmī).[22] The inseparability of Viṣṇu and Śrī—maintained even during His incarnations on earth (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 9.1.42)—has been developed into a central and extremely important doctrine in Śrīvaiṣṇavism.[23] Although Śrī is not mentioned in Vedānta Deśika's *stotra*, his philosophical treatise *Śata Dūṣaṇi* does refer to Hayagrīva as accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī:

> The [Supreme] God
> who has the face of a horse (*turaga-vadana*)
> is [full of] compassion.
> Accompanied by Lakṣmī,
> He removes the three innate *guṇas*
> difficult to overcome
>   by spreading the beautiful field wisdom.
>
> May that Glorious One make us,
>   who are impure/diminishing servants,
> cross over [His] creation that is the world
>   for [our] happiness. (*sūtra* 42)

This verse, which depicts Hayagrīva as accompanied by Śrī, is thus further proof of the fullness of His incarnation.[24] The Śrīvaiṣṇava depiction of Hayagrīva as accompanied by Lakṣmī becomes more common when Hayagrīva begins to be worshipped as the presiding deity at the Tiruvahīndrapuram Temple (see Chapter Seven).

The mysterious absence of any reference to Śrī in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* substantiates the possibility that Vedānta Deśika is writing the *stotra* to a specific Yoga-Hayagrīva iconic image, based on the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (see Chapter Four). Indeed, the Āgamas themselves do not commonly depict Hayagrīva as accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī (see Chapter Four). According to the oral tradition at the Tiruvahīndrapuram Temple, there were two images that were worshipped by Vedānta Deśika. Interestingly, temple officials claim that one of these was the Yoga-Hayagrīva form. However, it is

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[22] There is a picture of Hayagrīva accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī on the cover of the Śrīvaiṣ-ṇava booklet *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmstotrādi*, which contains Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. The booklet incorporates Śrī in its title and she is mentioned in the *kavaca*; however, Śrī is absent from Deśika's *stotra*.

[23] See Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 225-227.

[24] For further elaboration on the later depictions of Hayagrīva as accompanied by Śrī in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, see Chapter Seven.

important to note that the Yoga-Hayagrīva image in that temple today does not exactly parallel Vedānta Deśika's iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva.[25]

Although there are no clear and definitive references either to a particular icon of Hayagrīva or to a specific sacred place in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, Vedānta Deśika does implicitly mention the worship of iconic forms (*arcā-avatāra*) at pilgrimage places in his praise-poem to Hayagrīva:

> Helpless in the various kinds of learning and arts,
> I, who have not even [prostrated]
>   to [Your] incarnation
>   in the sacred place (*tīrtha*),
> am a new and worthy vessel
> for Your compassion
>   that eternally embraces the helpless. (v. 30)

2.1.2. *Nuances of Hayagrīva as Avatāra*

According ot Vedānta Deśika, Viṣṇu's *vibhavic* incarnation as Hayagrīva has as its purpose the welfare of humanity through the rescuing of the Vedas from the demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha (v. 8). Although Hayagrīva is recognized as a *vibhava-avatāra* who descended to earth to accomplish certain deeds, the poem emphasizes the interplay of the concept of the Vedas with the concept of *jñāna*.

Hayagrīva is described most frequently as the bestower of knowledge, speech and bliss on His devotees. However, there are two references in Vedānta Deśika's works that describe Him as the Granter of *mokṣa* (liberation). The first is in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* itself:

> [May my salutations]
> be with Your lotus-like feet
> and increase to their full strength!
>
> Those salutations which
> are the fruits of penances
>   measured out from previous [births]
> bring me liberation,
> and are the thought-gem
>   of [my] desires. (v. 19)[26]

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[25] See Chapter Seven for an elaboration on the two images of Hayagrīva at the Devanātha Temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram during the time of Vedānta Deśika.

[26] 'Thought gem' (*cintāmaṇi*) is a fabled gem supposed to yield its possessor all desires.

Likewise, a *sūtra* from Vedānta Deśika's *Śata Dūṣaṇi* expresses Hayagrīva's role in granting liberation to His devotees:

> Salutation to the Horse-headed One,
> Brahman,
> the Soul of the three categories of souls[27]
> the goal of *mokṣa* because [He frees those]
> bound [in transitory existence].[28] (*sūtra* 36)

Not only does Vedānta Deśika describe Hayagrīva as the Bestower of the Vedas and *jñāna*, but he also emphasizes meditation on Hayagrīva for the purpose of the visualization of God (vs. 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 29).

Although one of Vedānta Deśika's emphases is the *antaryāmin* form of Hayagrīva (He dwells in the mind and heart as divine light, leading one to the experience of knowledge and bliss), there are four verses (vs. 23-25, 32) that are iconographical and may therefore be interpreted as referring to one or another of Hayagrīva's iconic-incarnations. Hayagrīva is described as being seated on a white lotus and bearing four emblems: "a conch, disc, book, [and] with [Your] lotus-like hand in the position of exposition" (v. 32). In another verse, Hayagrīva's right hand is described as bearing "radiant rosary beads" (v. 24), while in still another His left hand "[shining] with red lustre [as if] bearing a cluster of corals, [holds] a book" (v. 25). As mentioned earlier, according to the oral tradition at Tiruvahīndrapuram there were two images (Yoga-Hayagrīva and Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva) that were worshipped by Vedānta Deśika. Although Vedānta Deśika's descriptions correspond to certain of the Pāñcarātric depictions of the deity, neither of the images conforms exactly to Vedānta Deśika's descriptions of the deity in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*.[29] In fact, Vedānta Deśika's depictions of Hayagrīva based on the Āgamas may be either descriptions of actual icons, or of mental images of the God imagined in meditation.

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[27] The 'three categories' (*tredha*) of souls (*cit*) are: (1) those bound by *karma* (*baddha*); (2) those who, having been liberated from *saṃsāra*, have attained the highest abode of the Lord (*mukta*); and (3) those eternally free, i.e., never bound to *saṃsāra* (*nitya-sūri*).

[28] 'Bound [by existence]' (*bandha*) refers to *saṃsāra*, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

[29] See Chapter Seven for a comparison of Deśika's description of Hayagrīva with the two images of Hayagrīva at Tiruvahīndrapuram.

2.1.3. *Hayagrīva Stotra and the Bhakti Tradition*

Several verses of the poem contain a mood typical of Śrīvaiṣṇava Bhakti poetry, both Tamil and Sanskrit. The theology of *prapatti* (liberation by surrender) and the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of the devotee's reliance upon the grace of God are present in the poem. Although there are several references to the Vedas in the poem—not surprisingly, given Hayagrīva's rescue of the Vedas in His *vibhava-avatāra*—there are also descriptions of Hayagrīva as God appearing in image form so that all His devotees (including ordinary people) can directly perceive Him and be perceived by Him in the *darśana* experience:[30]

> Out of Your very compassion,
> You must grant me Your side-long glance
> because even though ignorant,
> I am praising [You]! (v. 6)

and

> O God!
> May Your side-long glances
>   which are the companions
>   of Your waves of compassion,
> bestow upon me continuously
>   sacred speech .... (v. 27)

The side-long glance is associated in Śrīvaiṣṇavism with the Lord's presence in the temple. The calling on God for the bestowal of His 'side-long glance' is an expression—in the imagery of romance—of the devotee's desire to experience the delight of God's presence and His grace. Out of His compassion, God condescends to grant devotees the blissful experience of His presence. One of the goals of Śrīvaiṣṇava devotion is the blissful visual experience (*darśana*) of the iconic form of the Lord.

Likewise, even though the *stotra* emphasizes meditation upon the Lord, it is principally for an ecstatic experience of Hayagrīva, continuous with Āḻvār emotionalism, that its author longs for:

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[30] *Darśana* (sight) is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *dṛś* 'to see'. In Hindu temple religion, the 'sight' of the divine is the auspicious experience of the icon involving the meeting of the eyes of God and devotee whereby the devotee directly perceives God and is also perceived by Him. See Diana L. Eck, *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: Anima Books, 1981).

> O Master!
> the fortunate ones seek You
>   with their minds;
> [their] meditating upon You
> [grows] like the waxing moon;
>   in [their] heart
> an ocean of boundless bliss
>   overflows with tears [of joy]. (v. 17)

Earlier, the poet describes in one verse the ecstatic experience of bliss brought about by meditation on Hayagrīva:

> O Master!
> While meditating on Your Lordship,
> the fortunate ones continuously experience
> their bodily hair standing on end in delight,
>   from bathing in [Your] nectar,
>   which consists of bliss
>   that takes firm root
>   in some imperceptible place,
>   and [causes] sprouts [to stand upright]
>   on limbs [of the body]. (v. 16)

Hayagrīva is depicted as One who possesses light-like nectar, an image expressive of His grace for all devotees. He is the "Abode of compassion" (v. 5) and "produces the nectar of bliss like a high tide rising up from the Milk Ocean" on which Viṣṇu reclines (v. 13).

The major theological themes contained in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* (the *svarūpa* of God and the understanding of *avatāra*) demonstrate that Hayagriva, a full incarnation of Viṣṇu, is recognized as Supreme God. Unlike the Purāṇas and Āgamas, Vedānta Deśika consistently depicts Hayagrīva as a full form of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Not only do Vedānta Deśika's depictions reflect Hayagrīva's supremacy, they also conceptualize the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological understanding both of God in terms of all the five forms that God takes at different locales and of the equality of the many forms that Viṣṇu takes at specific places and sites, which is the topic of the following section.

2.1.4. *Topotheism: Vedānta Deśika's Depiction of Hayagrīva*

Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* manifests the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological understanding of *topotheism*—that the five forms of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu are all connected with specific locales and share an equality of status in being full forms of God. Hayagrīva is depicted as a form with the same ontological

status as the Supreme Viṣṇu who dwells in Vaikuṇṭha (*para*), whether as a horse-headed being on earth at a specific time and place (*vibhava-avatāra*), as the indweller in the heart/mind (*antaryāmin*) perceived by a yogi in meditation, or as an iconic-incarnation (*arcā-avatāra*) in the temple.

True, the *stotra* recognizes that the Hayagrīva incarnation has as His purpose the welfare of humanity through the saving of the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha (v. 8). But the *stotra* contains far more references to Hayagrīva as the Indweller of the soul/mind (*antaryāmin*). For example, "The wise ones in [their] hearts, contemplate your image" (v. 13); "The King Goose [dwells] in the minds of the knowledgeable ones ...who behold You, existing in [their] minds," (v. 14); "the fortunate ones seek [You], with their mind ... meditating upon You" (v. 17).

Because the mental image resembles in detail the iconography prescribed for a temple image, it is often difficult to discern whether or not some of Vedānta Deśika's stanzas are directed to an icon (see vs. 6, 19, 20, 27, 32). However, in stanza 30, Vedānta Deśika does implicitly mention the worship of iconic forms.

All these references to Hayagrīva (*vibhava-avatāra*, *antaryāmin*, and *arcā-avatāra*) are to forms of equal status, and most importantly they are all equal in status to the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Hayagrīva is also described as *para*: "the Cause [of the universe]" (v. 11), "Even before [there were] names and forms, You, revealer of the Vedas, are the [First] Cause from which all things were created" (v. 12), and the "All-pervading God" (v. 25).

The various religious streams discussed in Part II (Epic, Purāṇic, Āgamic) are manifest in Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* depiction of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning. However, what Vedānta Deśika selects from the various religious streams and how he adapts and organizes the chosen elements still remains to be understood. For that, we need to turn to the '*reverse-prismatic*' perspective, which is a useful tool to comprehend Vedānta Deśika's unique depiction of Hayagrīva, the subject of the following section.

3. THE REVERSE-PRISMATIC PERSPECTIVE: LOOKING BACK IN TIME

The attempt to more fully understand the development of Vedānta Deśika's particular depiction of Hayagrīva in his *stotra*—and thus comprehend the regional 'Śrīvaiṣṇava history' of the deity in Tamil Nadu—one needs to look backwards in time to see the influence on the *stotra* of the various religious streams (Epic, Purāṇic, Āgamic, local Tamil milieu). For, whereas the understanding of the Hayagrīva figure in the pan-Indian context involves an

understanding of a multiplicity of myths and images, the comprehension of the Hayagrīva figure in the regional Śrīvaiṣṇava context involves the study of Vedānta Deśika's highly selective synthesis of several variants.

In tracing the development of the images and worship of the pan-Indian deity Hayagrīva in the region of Tamil Nadu, I believe that the most suitable analogy for the purpose to be that of a prism. In physics, the prism is a mechanism used in the understanding of light. It refers to "a transparent polygonal solid, often having triangular ends and rectangular sides, for dispersing light into a spectrum or for reflecting and deviating light".[31] The prism diffracts light, breaking it into a spectrum of the rainbow colours. Similarly, in reverse fashion, white light can be understood to be fused together out of the spectrum of colours. It is in this latter sense of developing one out of the many that I employ the term *reverse-prismatic perspective*, a spectrum of rainbow colours fused into white light.

Although the prism belongs to the field of physics, it is a useful conceptual tool for understanding the development of an Indian deity, especially a pan-Indian god who is particularly revered and worshipped in the South. One may view Vedānta Deśika's praise-poem as the light and, *looking back in time*, see how through a Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view (prism) there has occurred in Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva a fusion of select elements from the various streams concerning the god. It should be noted that the use of the conceptual tool of the reverse-prismatic perspective emerged, not as a result of imposing a rigid preconceived methodology on the research materials (which can often limit understanding), but as a consequence of an intensive study employing diachronic and synchronic analysis.

By employing the reverse-prismatic perspective in the analysis of Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*, I mean to suggest that the poem can most profitably be viewed as a purposive and selective fusion of the varied spectrum of religious streams that have influenced the poet's consistent and unique depiction of Hayagrīva in the context of the Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view. This depiction further bolsters the notion that one can only speak of the 'histories' of the notion of the deity, and that there is a special Śrīvaiṣṇava 'local history' of Hayagrīva. The *Hayagrīva Stotra* integrates and unites elements from several religious streams: the pan-Indian mythic stream of the Epic and Purāṇic literature, the sectarian Pāñcarātra Āgamas that deal with theology, iconography and ritual practice, and the devotionalism of the Āḻvār poets. Significantly, these religious streams are manifest in Vedānta Deśika's *stotra*

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[31] Collins English Dictionary (2nd ed; London: William Collins Sons, 1986), p. 1217.

depiction of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning. However, what
Vedānta Deśika selects from the various religious streams and how he adapts
and organizes selected elements from them still remains to be understood.

3.1. Hayagrīva Stotra:
Continuities and Discontinuities with Śruti *and* Smṛti *Texts*

In order to understand clearly the influences of the various Hindu streams upon
Śrīvaiṣṇavism, and particularly to gain an understanding of Vedānta Deśika's
depiction of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning, one needs to look
at the pan-Indian references and depictions of Hayagrīva in the Epic and
Purāṇic texts. A comparative analysis of the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, in the light of
the Epic and Purāṇic *avatāric* listings and myths, demonstrates how the myth
about Hayagrīva's recovery of the Vedas in the pan-Indian mainstream texts
(which make Him the Saviour and Protector of the Vedas) provides the scope
for Vedānta Deśika's portrayal of the deity as the Saviour and Protector of His
devotees.

3.1.1. *Hayagrīva, Saviour of the Vedas*

The great importance that Vedānta Deśika places upon the Vedas is amply
reflected in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*. Although the poet evinces no concern at all
for the origins of the horse-headed figure, and does not even refer to the
possible Vedic antecedents of the later *avatāra* (as in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*),
he does make an explicit association between Hayagrīva and the Vedas. Firstly,
Vedānta Deśika describes Hayagrīva's rescue of the Vedas as the reason for
Brahmā's good fortune, as it was Brahmā from whom the Vedas had been
stolen:

> O treasury of speech!
> Brahma would definitely become dull-headed
> and lose his good fortune [as a god],
> if, You who alone are compassionate,
> did not teach him the Vedas
>   which [You] recovered from the demons. (v. 8)

This verse makes reference to Viṣṇu's particular descent to earth in the form
of *vibhava-avatāra*. Hayagrīva is praised for His act of recovering the Vedas
from the demons (Madhu and Kaiṭabha) and preserving it, a theme traced back
to the *Mahābhārata* and various Purāṇas (see Chapter Three).
   More significantly, however, Hayagrīva as a full form of Viṣṇu is also

associated in the *stotra* with the Vedas in a variety of other ways. Vedānta Deśika praises Hayagrīva for "sending forth the eternal Vedas" (v. 2) and "sending forth the collection of the *R̥g*, *Yajur* and Sāma" with His neighing sound (v. 3). Several verses describe Hayagrīva as not only the rescuer of the Vedas, but as their very source. They refer to Him as having the "Form of the Vedas" and being the "Manifestation of the Vedas" (v. 6), call Him the "Root of the great tree of the Vedas" (v. 11), and characterize Him as being the Protector of the Vedas:

> ... You alone
> protected the Vedic verses
>   down through the ages ... (v. 22)

Lastly, Hayagrīva's grace itself is referred to as being in the form of the Vedas (vs. 2, 3, 11).

Through His association with the Vedas, Hayagrīva also becomes associated with speech. He is regarded as the "Lord of speech" (vs. 4, 12) and as the "Treasury of speech" (v. 8). His grace of 'true' speech "removes the ignorance causing the loud and confused noise of speakers" (v. 3). Vedānta Deśika prays to be blessed with sacred speech by His grace, communicated through His side-long glances:

> O God!
> May Your side-long glances
>   which are the companions
>   of Your waves of compassion,
> bestow upon me continuously
> the sacred speech that flows like nectar
>   into people's ears [who hear me]
> [and are like] the cow of plenty,
>   for devotees seeking refuge [with You]. (v. 27)

Vedānta Deśika accords great potency to Hayagrīva's grace of 'true' speech:

> Those
>   who even for half a moment
> betake themselves to You
>   who bathe [them] with [Your] rays
>   of pure/white light
> can slow the heavenly Ganges
>   flowing down from the Himālayas
> with [their] unimpeded rush of words. (v. 15)

and

> ... [For] the ones who behold You
> existing in [their] minds
> ... Their words compete
>   in excelling [each other]
>   of their own accord,
>   with appropriate dignity. (v. 14)

The philosopher Vedānta Deśika further requests Hayagrīva to grant him the grace of success in debate: "may the tip of my tongue obtain [a place] on Your throne"(v. 28), and. "strengthen me as champion at producing words" (v. 29). For Vedānta Deśika, it is only by God's grace that one may become a vehicle of sacred speech. Śrīvaiṣṇavas regard Vedānta Deśika's own expertise in poetics and philosophical-theological debate as the fruit of his requests for the grace of 'true' speech in this *stotra*.

3.1.2. *Hayagrīva, the Benevolent Avatāra of Viṣṇu*

Vedānta Deśika's Hayagrīva is both continuous and discontinuous with the pan-Indian 'mainstream' *avatāric* listings and myths. Hayagrīva appears in several lists contained in the Purāṇas as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, yet he is most often considered therein as a subsidary deity of minor importance. Although used in 'mainstream' Hinduism and Pāñcarātra, the categories of 'major' (*mukhya*) and 'minor' (*gauṇa*) are, however, inadequate when viewed within the context of Vaiṣṇavism. As noted previously, Śrīvaiṣṇava theology contains the category of *aṃśa-avatāra* (partial incarnation), but this specifically refers to the incarnations of a portion or attribute of Viṣṇu's form, or of an emblem associated with Him.[32] There is an atypical description of Hayagrīva as a partial incarnation in *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 5.37 (ca. 350-950 C.E.). However, in the context of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, to categorize Hayagrīva as a 'minor' *avatāra* (or an *aṃśa-avatāra*) would definitely be theologically misleading. Vedānta Deśika's depictions of Hayagrīva consistently and clearly recognize Him as a full form of Viṣṇu.

Although there are disparate depictions of Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian 'mainstream' texts, Vedānta Deśika in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* makes reference to only one among several of the Hayagrīva myths and figures contained therein. *Hayagrīva Stotra* describes Hayagrīva as One who possesses a wholly benevolent nature; it contains no references to, or depictions of, Hayagrīva as

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[32] Some examples of *aṃśa-avatāras* are Sudarśana (the incarnation of Viṣṇu's *cakra*), Garuḍa, Kapila, and several of the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas.

ambivalent or demonic in nature. The central and crucial aspect emphasized by Vedānta Deśika from the pan-Indian texts (such as *Mahābhārata* 12.335.1-64) is Hayagrīva's benevolent act of preserving and restoring the cosmic order by killing the demons who had stolen the Vedas, an act to which Vedānta Deśika explicitly refers in his poem only once (v. 8).

The wholly benevolent nature of Hayagrīva, continuous with the Vaiṣṇava understanding of Viṣṇu, is what makes Hayagrīva recognizable as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. As in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, there is no mention in Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* as to how Hayagrīva became one with a horse-head (as there is in the passages on Hayagrīva in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*). This lack of reference to, or interest in, the etiology of Hayagrīva's horse-head is continuous with the reference to, and stories about, Him in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (one basis of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta philosophy, according to Śrīvaiṣṇavs)[33] and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The fact that Hayagrīva appears as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which is a South Indian text, clearly demonstrates that Hayagrīva's presence in the South was not limited to Śrīvaiṣṇavism. But Vedānta Deśika, following the Āḻvārs and the early Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Parāśara Bhaṭṭar (see Chapter Five), is careful to establish Hayagrīva as a wholly benevolent 'full' form of God. Not unexpectedly, with his Śrīvaiṣṇava theological orientation, Vedānta Deśika only incorporates the Purāṇic myth of the benevolent Hayagrīva who recovers the Vedas in order to maintain the cosmic order. In this, Vedānta Deśika may have had a dual agenda: the desire to give Vedic legitimacy to Śrīvaiṣṇavism and to maintain the wholly taintless (*amalatva*) nature of Viṣṇu's *avatāra*.

More broadly, the Epic and Purāṇic myth of Hayagrīva's benevolent act of restoring the Vedas is important for Vedānta Deśika, because it (1) establishes the deity as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, (2) associates Him with the Vedas, and (3) depicts Him as a protector of the devotees on the basis of having killed the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. However, notwithstanding the significance of these three aspects, Vedānta Deśika does not, in fact, place as much importance upon the Hayagrīva myth as he does upon Hayagrīva's qualities and power. But it is precisely the focus on Hayagrīva's qualities and power that makes these three aspects consequential nonetheless, for they provide the scope for Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning.

As we have seen, Vedānta Deśika appears most focused on Hayagrīva's

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[33] See *Stotra Ratna*, v. 4. *Stotraratna, or The Hymn-Jewel, of Śrī Yāmunācārya* (translation by Swami Adidenanda) (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1950), p. 7.

connection with the Vedas, speech and mantras. This particular aspect reflects Āgamic influence on Vedānta Deśika, and on Śrīvaiṣṇavism as a whole.

3.2. Hayagrīva Stotra *in the Light of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas*

Śrīvaiṣṇavism—a temple-centred tradition with a strong orientation towards icon worship—has been influenced to a considerable degree by the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, and Āgamic beliefs, concepts, and rituals have been incorporated into the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. Given the influence of the Āgamas on the development of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, an analysis of the Āgamic references to Hayagrīva—from the viewpoints of theology, devotion, and iconography—is crucial to a better understanding of Vedānta Deśika's portrayal of Hayagrīva in the *Hayagrīva Stotra.*

The continuities and discontinuities of the Pāñcarātra Āgamic depictions of Hayagrīva with the *Hayagrīva Stotra* shed light on how the portrayal of Hayagrīva is, in fact, a selective synthesis of elements from both the pan-Indian mainstream texts (*Mahābhārata*, Vaiṣṇava and encyclopedic Purāṇas) and the pan-Indian sectarian texts (Pāñcarātra Āgamas). Furthermore, the *stotra* provokes a pertinent question about the relation between the Purāṇic and Āgamic texts in respect of the source of, the mythology about, and iconographical references to, Hayagrīva. The references to Hayagrīva in the Āgamas illuminate one aspect of the development of this *avatāra* as the Lord of Light and Learning within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, but also the ways in which Śrīvaiṣṇavism has exploited, expanded and, in some cases, ignored Pāñcarātra theological tenets.

3.2.1. *Hayagrīva as the Full Form of Viṣṇu*

A comparative study of the Āgamic descriptions of Hayagrīva as an emanation of a *vyūha* reveals the Āgamic influence on Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva. Inconsistencies are to be found in various Āgamic depictions of Hayagrīva. *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*, following *Mahābhārata* 12.327.79-87, depicts Him as an emanation from the *vyūha* Aniruddha; *Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā* describes Hayagrīva as an emanation from the *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa.[34] Vedānta Deśika himself does not portray Hayagrīva as a *vyūha* emanation. Significantly, however, he does link the qualities associated with *both* Aniruddha and

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[34] Also contained in *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Mahāpurāṇa* 3.80.3b.

Saṃkarṣaṇa to Hayagrīva. According to Pāñcarātra and Śrīvaiṣṇava theology, Aniruddha's special qualities are creative energy (*śakti*) and splendour (*tejas*); the Saṃkarṣaṇa *vyūha* is endowed with the qualities of knowledge (*jñāna*) and strength (*bala*) and it is Saṃkarṣaṇa who provides the Śāstras. Vedānta Deśika's portrayal of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning must certainly have its origins in the qualities of these two *vyūhas*. Vedānta Deśika ignores the Āgamic *vyūha-vibhava* systematic theology, but in fact the *tejas* of Aniruddha has become the Light in the *stotra* of Hayagrīva while the *jñāna* of Saṃkarṣaṇa (and his role as the provider of the Śāstras) has emerged as Hayagrīva's Learning.

Vedānta Deśika refers to *Sātvata Saṃhitā* and *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* in his defence of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas entitled *Pāñcarātra Rakṣā*.[35] Thus, we can be certain that Vedānta Deśika was familiar with the two *saṃhitās* that contain extensive lists of Viṣṇu's *avatāras* (including Hayagrīva). These texts portray Hayagrīva's status with ambiguity. In one text, Hayagrīva is regarded as a 'major' (*mukhya*) *avatāra*; in another He appears as a 'minor' (*gauṇa*) form of Viṣṇu. In regard to these Āgamic categories, Vedānta Deśika carefully distinguishes himself from Pāñcarātra theology. Indeed, Vedānta Deśika writes that the *mukhya* and *gauṇa* categories of the *vibhava-avatāra* are simply for the purpose of 'organization', and instead only uses *vyūha* and *vibhava-avatāra* as technical terms for the many forms found in the Āgamic listings.[36]

In his *magnum opus*, *Rahasya Traya Sāra*, Vedānta Deśika explicitly states that there are thirty to forty *vibhava* incarnations of Viṣṇu, but he provides neither an extensive and systematic theological description of the evolution of the forms emanating from the Supreme God (as do certain Pāñcarātra Āgamas), nor a list of the incarnations (as do the various Pāñcarātra Āgamas).[37] Vedānta Deśika appears to remove *avatāras* from their Āgamic doctrinal context (*vyūha* and *vibhava-avatāra* theory and listings) and uses them primarily in a

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[35] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā of Vedānta Deśika*, pp. 186-189 (Index).

[36] Furthermore, the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Piḷḷai Lokācārya in his treatise *Tattvatraya* distinguishes the major (*mukhya*) form from the subsidiary (*gauṇa*) form of the Lord; while the former type possesses God's essential nature, the latter *avatāric* form exists as a result of God's will (*sūtra* 104). According to Lokācārya, one should worship the *mukhya* form if desirous of *mokṣa* (*sūtra* 105), as the *gauṇa* form is only able to bestow worldly boons (*sūtra* 106). Pillai Lokācārya, *The Tattvatraya of Lokācārya: A Treatise on Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* (translation by B.M. Awasthi and C.K. Datta) (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973).

[37] Vedānta Deśika, *Rahasyatrayasāra*, Chapter Five, section 'Īśvara'.

devotional context.[38] Unlike the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, even as he incorporates *vyūha* imagery (light and learning) Vedānta Deśika is consistent in his portrayal of Hayagrīva as a full *avatāra* of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.

According to the Āgamas (such as *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*), whereas the primary (*mukhya*) *vibhava-avatāras* are worthy of worship for liberation (*mokṣa*), the secondary (*gauṇa*) *avatāras* should be worshipped only for mundane fruits. No doubt, Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* mentions Hayagrīva as bestowing mundane fruits, such as the mastery of speech in theological debate (v. 28), but far more significantly it describes Him as granting liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (v. 19). The fact that Vedānta Deśika looks to Hayagrīva not only for material boons, but for *mokṣa* itself, is further proof of the poet's understanding of Hayagrīva's status as the full form of Viṣṇu. Verse 19 is a key verse, reflecting the transformation from the inconsistently portrayed deity of the Purāṇas, and the ambiguously described deity in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, into a deity identical with the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.

Although there is a great deal of ambiguity regarding Hayagrīva's theological status in the Āgamas, His mantraic form is associated with the Eternal Spirit and the Vedas in *Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* 24.35b. This aspect can be understood as perhaps the earliest Āgamic attempt to establish Hayagrīva's supremacy. This particular strand of Āgamic theology is reflected in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. The *stotra* refers to Hayagrīva as having the form of mantras: "You, whose body consists of mantras" (v.10). This specific theological description of Hayagrīva as having mantraic form is directly based on the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (for example, *Śeṣa Saṃhitā* 40.17). Among the pan-Indian 'mainstream' texts, a similar depiction of Hayagrīva is found only in the encyclopedic Purāṇas (see, for example, the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.13.1-10; 1.34 which is believed to contain summaries of Āgamic literature). The similarities between the Āgamas and encyclopedic Purāṇas reflect the relation between the two genres of Hindu literature.

It appears that the earliest detailed myth of the benevolent Hayagrīva's recovery of the Vedas, found in the *Mahābhārata*, later referred to in several Purāṇas (*Agni*, *Bhāgavata*), is similarly retold in the *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā*.

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[38] As discussed in Chapter Five under 'The Śrīvaiṣṇava Tradition', Rāmānuja removed the *vyūha* theory and the *ṣaṭ-guṇas* of God from their original doctrinal and cosmological contexts and used them in the *Śrī Bhāṣya* in a devotional context; that is, he treated the *vyūha* theory solely as providing the sacred names of the Godhead to be used in meditation, and carefully described the *ṣaṭ-guṇas* as less essential to the nature of Brahman than the five defining qualities of Brahman's *svarūpa* (essential nature), which he derived from the *Upaniṣads* (*Śrī Bhāṣya* 3.3.11-13); (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.1; 2.5; 3.1; 3.6 and *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 3.3). See Carman, *Theology of Rāmānuja*, p. 92.

Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā begins with the story about Hayagrīva and His glorious act of saving the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha—the central myth about the benevolent Hayagrīva referred to in the *Mahābhārata*, *Agni Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. Likewise, Hayagrīva is also described in the Āgamic corpus as "having knowledge of the Vedas" and as the "Bestower of knowledge" (*Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā*), as well as the "Horse-faced One who is [in the form] of the Vedas, and *smṛti* ..." (*Pauṣkara Saṃhitā* 24.35b). These depictions are central both to Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* and the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.

An important doctrine of Śrīvaiṣṇavism pertains to the eternal inseparability of Lord Viṣṇu and His consort Śrī. As seen in Chapter Five, Śrī, taking an appropriate form, is said to accompany Viṣṇu in each and every one of His incarnations.[39] It is therefore surprising that the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, although presenting Hayagrīva as a 'full' form of Viṣṇu, never depicts Him as being accompanied by Lakṣmī. This is, however, continuous with the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, in which Hayagrīva is not usually depicted as being accompanied by His consort.[40] In the vast majority of Āgamic depictions, Hayagrīva is either standing or sitting alone. Although Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* does not depict Hayagrīva accompanied by Lakṣmī, his philosophical treatise *Śata Dūṣaṇi* does. Furthermore, we find that at Tiruvahīndrapuram, where Hayagrīva is explicitly worshipped as an iconic incarnation of the Supreme (see Chapter Seven), there is an image of Him accompanied by Lakṣmī.

3.2.2. *The Divine Image of Hayagrīva*

A few of the poetic descriptions of Hayagrīva in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* are continuous with mainstream Vaiṣṇavism. The conventional devotional-poetic depictions of Hayagrīva include the common lotus (*padma*) motif, reflecting Viṣṇu's purity, tenderness, and beauty. Hayagrīva is described as having "lotus-like feet" (v. 19), "lotus-like hands" (v. 32), and as "seated on a white lotus" (v. 32). There are also references to Hayagriva's "side-long glances" (v. 27), a common motif reflective of the Lord's compassion and grace. These motifs, often contained in Hindu devotional poetry, have their origins in classical Sanskrit love poetry.

Certain of the poetic descriptions of Hayagrīva in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* are

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[39] See Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 225-227.
[40] There are two exceptions to this depiction in the Āgamas surveyed. Hayagrīva is portrayed as being accompanied by Lakṣmī in *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* 20.2.24-26 as well as accompanied by Śrīdevī and Bhūmidevī in *Parāśara Saṃhitā* 28.6.

continuous with the *stotra* genre generally. The gods are frequently described in the *stotras* as 'shining' (*devas* 'shining ones'), a feature more ancient than the Āgamas. In the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, Hayagrīva is depicted as having "the body [made of] pure crystal" (v. 1) and is frequently referred to as "Splendour".[41] Both of these depictions reflect Hayagrīva's luminosity—which is both a name of Viṣṇu 'He Who shines' (*bhānuḥ*) and one of His six qualities (*ṣaḍguṇas*), *tejas* (splendour), a quality associated with *vyūha* Aniruddha (see 'Theological Status' above). Throughout the poem, Hayagrīva is described as possessing white or bright light. Although 'Splendour' is one of the names of Viṣṇu and in Śrī Vaṣṇava *stotras*, following the Āḻvārs, the temple deity is often compared to a brilliantly coloured gem (most often as blue sapphire), white light or crystal is not a feature usually associated with Him.[42] According to the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, Hayagrīva's radiance is said to be "more lustrous than a mountain of pure crystal gems" (v. 2), He is compared to a "cut crystal" (v. 32), and His body is said to be "[made of] pure crystal" (v. 1).

This *stotra* imagery, although ancient, may be Āgamic in origin. *Padma Saṃhitā* 22.2b-8a describes Hayagrīva as being composed of "crystal-like nectar", continuous with the frequent descriptions of His luminosity. This description is a prominent theme in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, too. Not only is there a luminous quality to Vedānta Deśika's Hayagrīva, but light is also said to radiate from the objects He bears. Hayagrīva's left hand holds a book which "[shines] with red lustre [as if] bearing a cluster of corals" (v. 25), while His right hand holds "the radiant rosary beads" (v. 24).

Four stanzas in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* (vs. 23-25, 32) are especially significant in that they may well be iconographical in content. Since, according to Āgamic practice, iconography is employed both in terms of an appropriate mental image and a temple icon, the referent of these stanzas is, however, somewhat ambiguous. As in the Āgamas, the iconographical emblems and

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[41] *Vishnu Sahasranāma with the Bhashya of Sri Parasara Bhattar*, translation by Prof. A. Srinivasa Raghavan (Madras: Visishtadvaita Prachari Sabha, 1983), n. 126. There are other names reflecting Viṣṇu's splendour: *candra-aṃśuḥ* 'He who is possessed of effulgent rays like those of the moon' (n. 282); *bhāskara-dyutiḥ* 'He Who has the refulgence of the sun' (n. 283); *amṛta-aṃśu-udbhava* 'the Source of the nectar-rayed moon' (n. 284); and *bhānuḥ* 'Lustrous Sun' (n. 285).

[42] There is a reference to the quality of crystal-like radiance in the awakened ones in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.24.25-29). The Purāṇa states the following concerning those who will be saved by Viṣṇu's *avatāra* (Kalkin) during the Kali age, when the practices taught by the Vedas and the institutions of law shall nearly have ceased: "He [that is, Kalkin] will then re-establish righteousness upon earth; and the minds of those who will live at the end of the Kali age shall be awakened, and shall be as pellucid as crystal."

features connected with Hayagrīva in Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* can be divided
into two categories: those that are associated with Viṣṇu generally—the conch
(*śaṅkha*), the discus (*cakra*) and the club (*gada*)—and those that are specific
to the Hayagrīva incarnation. Specific to Hayagrīva are the book (*pustaka* in
v. 25), the rosary beads (*mālā* in v. 24), the hand position of exposition
(*vyākhyāna-mudrā* in vs. 23, 32). These emblems that are specifically attributed
to Hayagrīva are, interestingly, continuous with the Tantric tradition and are
found in several Pāñcarātra passages (for example, *Padma Saṃhitā* 22.2b-8a),[43]
thus reflecting the influence of the Āgamic tradition on Vedānta Deśika. The
book can be interpreted as the Vedas, or simply the manifestation of
Hayagrīva's divine wisdom. The rosary beads most likely have their origin in
the practice of mantra—the rosary being a device for counting the number of
mantra repetitions. Finally, Hayagrīva's hand position of knowledge (*jñāna-
mudrā*) symbolizes His role as Expounder of the Vedas and true wisdom. It is
significant that the two emblems (the rosary and the *jñāna-mudrā*) that are
attributed specifically to Hayagrīva, although not described in the 'mainstream'
Epic and Purāṇic texts, appear in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas; their appearance
reflects the role of Hayagrīva as the bestower of knowledge through
meditation.

Importantly, Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* reflects the confluence of
iconography and mantra.[44] As we have seen, Hayagrīva is, on the one hand,
depicted in image form with specific iconographical features and emblems
(*devatā-mūrti*) (v. 32). On the other hand, He is also described in mantraic
fashion, as "You, whose body consists of mantras" (v. 10). Furthermore, the
poem claims that the devotee raises himself up to God "with the splendorous
form of *śabda* (mantra or *śruti*)" (v. 29). Key syllables (*bīja-akṣara*) are
representative of particular deities. Hayagrīva is also referred to as the
"imperishable Divine Source of the sacred syllable (*akṣara*)" (v. 11), that is,
Oṃ—the eternal syllable and the ultimate source of sound and creation.
Interestingly, the theological, poetic and iconographical descriptions of
Hayagrīva in the *stotra* bring together the *devatā*, mantra, and *yantra* forms of

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[43] And, indeed, Vedānta Deśika makes reference to the *Padma Saṃhitā* in his defence of
the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (*Pāñcarātra Rakṣā*), which is evidence that he was familiar with the
text. *Pāñcarātrarakṣā of Vedānta Deśika*, pp. 186-189 (Index).

[44] In looking at the relation between the concrete and mental images of Śiva in the Āga-
mas, Brunner identifies two types of concrete images (symbolic and figurative) that have
different functions; while the former is to support exterior worship, the latter is to evoke
characteristics of divinity in the devotee. Brunner, "L'Image Divine dans le Culte Āgamique
de Śiva" in *L'Image Divine*, p. 23.

a deity (especially *devatā* and mantra) as described in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. The verses not only parallel the mantraic and *yantraic* practice of the Āgamic tradition, but also show that the author of *Hayagrīva Stotra* has employed and expanded these concepts by personalizing the Āgamic approach to both mantra and deity.

3.2.3. *Hayagrīva Stotra and the Personalization of Mantra*

Śrīvaiṣṇavas regard the *Hayagrīva Stotra* as a poetical hymn created from the mantra of Hayagrīva. The recitative purpose of the *Hayagrīva Stotra* is the obtaining of the boons of powerful speech and knowledge. According to Staal, although the mantras that are prescribed in the Purāṇas are literally meaningful (unlike the Tantric *bīja-mantras*), they are treated as if they are, in fact, devoid of meaning.[45] By way of contrast, in *Hayagrīva Stotra* the mantra is personalized and given not only meaning but explicit visual content.

The Pāñcarātra Āgamas depict three forms of a deity: *devatā* (personifying), mantra (sonic), and *yantra* (symbolic). In his *stotra*, Vedānta Deśika takes up and expands upon the Āgamic abstract linkage of mantra and *yantra* with *devatā*, by incorporating into his poem typical devotional-poetic motifs and Āḻvār emotionalism. This, in effect, creates a highly 'personalized' understanding of God, more appropriate for Śrīvaiṣṇavism in which a unique spirituality, founded on the devotees' intimate and emotional relationship with Deity (as *antaryāmin*, or more commonly, *arcā-avatāra*), is central. Fundamentally, then, *Hayagrīva Stotra* reflects the process of the removal of Āgamic images and ideas from their Pāñcarātric milieu, and their recontextualization according to the unique Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view.

According to Vedānta Deśika, Hayagrīva not only has the form of knowledge and bliss (v. 1), but He is the means for his devotees to attain knowledge and bliss (v. 13), and is Himself the bestower of knowledge and bliss (v. 5). This pattern of representation directly corresponds to the role of mantra in the Āgamic tradition: mantra is the syllabic form of Truth, the means of attaining Truth, and the giver of Truth.[46] Unlike the ritual texts based on the Āgamas, however, the *Hayagrīva Stotra* represents a confluence of

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[45] Kane's rationale is that they are not distinguished from each other by the different deities to which they refer or by their 'translatory meanings', but by the fact that these mantras are, respectively, five-syllabic (*pañcakṣara*), six-syllable (*ṣaḍakṣara*), eight-syllabic, etc. Kane 1930, cited in Staal's "Vedic Mantra", in *Mantra*, p. 63.

[46] Hayagrīva is also described as having the form of the Vedas (vs. 3, 4), as being the means for his devotees to attain the Vedas (vs. 3, 4), and also as One who grants the wisdom of the Vedas to his devotees (vs. 3, 4, 6, 10).

Tantric ritual understanding of deity (*devatā*, mantra and *yantra*) and ecstatic Bhakti (emotional worship of a personalized God). The *stotra* profoundly demonstrates the process of the 'personalization' of the Āgamic understanding of mantra. For Pāñcarātrins mantra is both the goal and the means; Śrīvaiṣṇavas extend the underlying concept of the unity of goal and means to a more personal God Himself.

3.3. *Hayagrīva in the Regional Hymns of the Tamil Āḻvārs and An Early Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya*

Following the Āḻvārs and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, Vedānta Deśika is careful to establish Hayagrīva as a wholly benevolent *avatāra* of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Firstly, just as Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār equates the Lords of Naṅkūr and Tiruvaḻuntūr with Hayagrīva, and Bhaṭṭar identifies the many forms of Viṣṇu, including Hayagrīva, with the icon at Śrīraṅgam, Vedānta Deśika also implicitly recognizes the iconic form of Hayagrīva in the temple as a form with the same ontological status as the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu (v. 30).

Secondly, on the basis of Nammāḻvār's and Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār's stanzas listing Viṣṇu's *avatāras*, we can be confident that these two Āḻvārs regarded Hayagrīva as the full form of God and as Protector of the world. Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār's *Periya Tirumoḻi* contains the only Āḻvār reference to the mythic act of Hayagrīva's recovery of the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 5.3.2 and 7.8.2). Tirumaṅkai explicitly praises Hayagrīva for His glorious act of saving the universe by recovering the Vedas. The portrayal of Hayagrīva in Bhaṭṭar's stanza describes the horse-headed God as having recovered the Vedas from the demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, and as having bequeathed the Vedas to Brahmā, bringing life to all. *Hayagrīva Stotra*'s depiction of Hayagrīva as the recoverer of the Vedas and as a benevolent protector is thus continuous with both the Āḻvārs and Bhaṭṭar. Thirdly, similar to both the Āḻvārs and Bhaṭṭar, Vedānta Deśika does not refer to, nor show any concern about, the etiology of Viṣṇu's horse-head (as is done in the Hayagrīva passages in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*). Any reference to etiology would have undermined the wholly benevolent nature of Viṣṇu's *avatāra*.

Although Vedānta Deśika's depiction of Hayagrīva is continuous with that of the Āḻvārs and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, there are some new features in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. Vedānta Deśika does not only write about Hayagrīva's benevolent act of recovering the Vedas at a certain time and place (as a *vibhava-avatāra*), but also explicitly refers to Him as the Supreme who

grants both boons and *mokṣa*. For Vedānta Deśika, Hayagrīva, the Protector of
the Vedas, has also become the Protector of His devotees. It is obvious that,
though Vedānta Deśika's poem is continuous with the early Tamil references,
he moves beyond the Āḻvārs and Vaiṣṇava Purāṇic descriptions of the deity. He
depicts Hayagrīva as not only the saviour of the Vedas, but their very source.

The various religious streams, including the pan-Indian mainstream texts,
are well, even if selectively, manifest in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*
depiction of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning. Vedānta Deśika
selects from the various religious streams, and organizes and adapts selective
elements according to the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological world-view. Because he
unites the pan-Indian Sanskrit stream of religious literature and the regional
Tamil Āḻvār religion of grace, Vedānta Deśika's portrayal of Hayagrīva in this
stotra has both historical and theological significance.

4. Conclusions

The important theological themes contained in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva
Stotra* are: (1) Hayagrīva's essential nature (*svarūpa*) as *jñāna* and *ānanda*, and
thus as identical with Lord Viṣṇu, (2) emotional devotion (Bhakti) towards the
deity, (3) the Supreme's role as Recoverer and Protector of the Vedas, which
is then extended to His role as Protector of His devotees, and (4) the Supreme
as the source of the syllable *Oṃ*. In essence, Vedānta Deśika depicted
Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning, who as a 'full-form' of God can
be approached for both mundane fruits and for *mokṣa*. Vedānta Deśika
recognized Hayagrīva as *para*, *antaryāmin*, and probably *arcā*, reflecting
Śrīvaiṣṇava *topotheism*.

As one analyzes the mythological (benevolent, malevolent, ambivalent)
depictions and stories of Hayagrīva in the Epics and Purāṇas, as one surveys
the variant theological and ritual references to Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian
sectarian Āgamic texts, and as one considers further the developments in the
regional Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, it becomes obvious that the material on
Hayagrīva defies any simple interpretation that suggests a unilinear
development of the deity. The tracing of the development of the images and
worship of this pan-Indian deity, who is at the same time especially revered in
the South, is a matter of great complexity. The pan-Indian texts reveal a
profound and abundant diversity in the depictions of the horse-headed figure.
On the basis of the wide variety of texts surveyed for the present study, it
appears that one can only speak in the plural of the '*histories*', rather than a
single history, of the horse-headed figure Hayagrīva.

The bewildering complexity that is manifest in the broad pattern of the many and variant portrayals of Hayagrīva is also accompanied by a high degree of selectivity in the working out of Śrīvaiṣṇavism's particular history of the deity. By using the '*reverse prismatic*' perspective, the *Hayagrīva Sotra* is here revealed to be a fusion of a spectrum of selected elements from a variety of religious streams (Epic, Purāṇic, Āgamic, local Tamilian). While it is apparent that there are many 'histories' of the deity, the 'Śrīvaiṣṇava history' of the understanding of Hayagrīva is, among those histories, unique. That 'history' demonstrates the interrelation among the various religious streams within Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Vedānta Deśika selects elements from the various religious streams, and then adapts and organizes them according to his Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view.

Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* is a poem that shows Śrīvaiṣṇava theology to represent a highly selective confluence of the classical myths contained in the *Mahābhārata* and Purāṇas, the esoteric (*devatā*, *yantra* and mantra) and iconographical elements of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas—which he presents in a personalized form—and Āḻvār devotionalism. It is striking that this product of a 'local' tradition is a marvel of sophistication and synthesis when compared to any depiction of Hayagrīva at the level of the pan-Indian tradition.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LIVING TRADITION AT TIRUVAHĪNDRAPURAM:
TOPOTHEISM AND THE VAṬAKALAI WORSHIP OF
HAYAGRĪVA

Given the vast diversity of gods and goddesses in Hinduism, it is a
pertinent question as to why a particular god or goddess is worshipped as
the presiding deity in a specific temple, and how it has come to gain
popularity in the local context. Vedānta Deśika's religious experience of
the grace of Hayagrīva is said to have led to his composition of the
Hayagrīva Stotra and, interestingly, it is only after Vedānta Deśika that we
see the development of a strong local tradition of devotion to Hayagrīva.
Indeed, Deśika's association with Hayagrīva resulted in the Vaṭakalai
popularization of devotion to Hayagrīva. Out of reverence for their founder,
the Vaṭakalais embraced the worship of Hayagrīva as a distinguishing
feature of their particular sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism.

Three centuries after Vedānta Deśika attempted to reconcile the more
radical notions of Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine with a more orthodox Hinduism,
a split occurred in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition (ca. 17th-18th century).
Although Deśika appears to have had no intention to create a sub-sect, nor
to cause a division within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, he has nonetheless
come to be revered as an Ācārya of the Vaṭakalai sect (Northern school) of
Śrīvaiṣṇavism.[1] Vedānta Deśika's connection with Hayagrīva in Tiruva-
hīndrapuram, and the *stotra* he wrote there in His praise, brought about the
Vaṭakalai celebration of the worship of the horse-headed deity in Tamil
Nadu. Most importantly, a Hayagrīva temple was built at Tiruvahīndra-
puram where, according to legend, Vedānta Deśika had first received
Hayagrīva's grace.

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[1] Similarly, Maṇavāḷamāmuni has come to be recognized as belonging to the lineage of
the Teṉkalai sect (Southern school) of Śrīvaiṣṇavism even though he, too, had not intended
to cause the split, which is believed to have occurred ca. 17th-18th century. K.K.A.
Venkatachari, *The Maṇipravāḷa Literature of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas* (Bombay: Ananth-
acharya Research Institute, 1978), pp. 164-166.

According to tradition, the Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai sects differ on eighteen issues (doctrinal
and ritual). For further elaboration, see 'The Religious Thought of Vedānta Deśika' in Chapter
Six. For a full discussion of the Śrīvaiṣṇava split into the two sects, see Mumme, *The
Śrīvaiṣṇava Theological Dispute*.

Besides the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, Śrīvaiṣṇavas use three other hymns devoted to Hayagrīva which reflect Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional ritual practice: *(1) Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti* (*The Praise of the Root Mantra of Śrī Hayagrīva*), *(2) Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana* (*Morning Prayer to Śrī Hayagrīva*), and (3) *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti* (*Surrender to Hayagrīva Accompanied by Śrī Lakṣmī*). (All quotations from these three hymns are based on my own original translations.) As frequently found in the Hindu tradition, these three works are unauthored, implying that their source is divine. It is difficult to date the hymns, but they are certaintly from the post-Vedānta Deśika era.[2] They appear to have been composed in Tamil Nadu after Vedānta Deśika and the establishment of the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple; that is, the three compositions most likely are posterior to the regional establishment of the worship of Hayagrīva as the presiding deity at the temple. They follow Śrīvaiṣṇava ritual practice and are meant to be used in temple or home rituals, even as they also explicitly depict Hayagrīva's status as the 'full form' of Viṣṇu, incarnate in an icon (*arcā-avatāra*).

This chapter deals with Hayagrīva after Vedānta Deśika. Apart from discussing local Vaṭakalai stories about Vedānta Deśika, it provides an account of the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple and its rituals, as well as a commentary on the significance of the three devotional hymns used by Śrīvaiṣṇavas in praise of Hayagrīva. Additionally, the chapter includes an analysis of the role and status of Hayagrīva in Tamil Nadu. The development of Hayagrīva's status and role in the Tamil milieu reveals both the Vaṭakalai popularization of Hayagrīva because of His association with the recognized founder of the sect (Vedānta Deśika) and the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological understanding that the five forms of God appear in their full form at specific places as Supreme Viṣṇu—*topotheism*. Though Hayagrīva's status in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* corresponds to the various forms of Viṣṇu (*para*, *vibhava*, *antaryāmin*, and probably *arcā*), Hayagrīva worship in contemporary Tamil Nadu clearly reflects the Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional preference for the Supreme Viṣṇu's iconic-incarnations (*arcā-avatāra*) in specific places in the Tamil lands. The regional history of the horse-headed deity illuminates the change in the status and role of Hayagrīva in the light of the Śrīvaiṣṇava concept of the *arcā-avatāric* form of God.

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[2] One reason for this conclusion is that *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti* contains a complete verse from Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. See section below on 'Śrīvaiṣṇava Hymns in Praise of Hayagrīva'.

1. Tiruvahīndrapuram: the Divine Region of Hayagrīva

According to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, there are one-hundred and eight *divya-deśas* (divine regions or sacred places). Two of the divine places are located beyond the earth: Vaikuṇṭha, Viṣṇu's Supreme Heaven, and the Milk Ocean on which Viṣṇu reclines. The remaining 105 locales are spread throughout the sub-continent. The pilgrimage places located in present day Tamil Nadu are categorized according to five different regions: Cōḻa Nāṭu, Pāṇḍya Nāṭu, Malai Nāṭu, Nāṭu Nāṭu, and Toṇḍai Nāṭu. Two *divya-deśas* are located in Nāṭu Nāṭu (South Arcot District), one being Tiruvahīndrapuram.[3] The presiding deity at Tiruvahīndrapuram is Devanātha (Tamil, Devanāyaka Perumāḷ) who is accompanied by the goddess Hemāmbuja Nāyakī (or Vaikuṇṭhavallī).

As we will see, Vedānta Deśika is very closely associated with the Devanātha Temple, having written a complete poem, *Devanāyaka Pañcāśat*, in its praise. The river that runs close to the temple is called the River Garuḍa (*garuḍa-nadī*). On the basis of information from two modern-day devotees of Hayagrīva, Neelameha Bhattachariar, a priest of the temple, and T.K. Piran (whom I interviewed),[4] the Devanātha Temple was built some 550 years before Vedānta Deśika's time (ca. 8th or 9th century C.E.). According to Pandit Neelameha Bhattachariar, there exists a unique feature in the iconography of the *mūla-bera* (fixed or immovable image)[5] of Lord Devanātha at Tiruvahīndrapuram: a lotus in the middle of Devanātha's hand represents Brahmā, an eye in the forehead represents Śiva, and His forelocks of hair also represent Śiva. The temple priest maintains that all the three deities—Brahmā,Viṣṇu and Śiva—are thus

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[3] According to Gopalan, other names for Tiruvahīndrapuram are: 'Ayindai, Phanipathipuram, Ponn Ayindai, Tennyindai, and Ayindainagar'. *Śrī Vaishnava Divya Deśams (108 Tiruppatis)* (compiled by L.V. Gopalan) (Madras: Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha, 1972), p. 55.

[4] An interview with T.K. Piran, Neelameha Bhattachariar, D. Rajagopalan, and Thiruvaezi Gopalachariar, was held on January 24, 1997 at the home of T.K. Piran at Tiruvahīndrapuram. As the discussion and conversation was in Tamil, Dr. K.K.A. Venkatachari asked the questions I had prepared and translated their answers into English. I have reworked the contents of the conversation so that it is organized according to the outline of my study. However, I have remained true to the ideas and comments of the various people present during the interview. All four men spoke of Hayagrīva, Vedānta Deśika, and the Devanātha and Hayagrīva temples.

[5] Every South Indian temple contains a *mūla-bera*, the main deity which is immovable and usually of granite. A smaller movable icon is called the *utsava-bera* (*utsava*, festival), because it is taken out in procession during special festival days.

represented here.[6] Devanātha's *utsava-bera* (the movable festival image) carries the *śaṅkha*, *cakra* and *gaḍa* in three hands, whereas the fourth hand holds the lotus. The temple today functions according to Vaikhānasa Āgamic ritual (not Pāñcarātra).[7]

Pandit Bhattachariar claims that, according to local tradition, during Vedānta Deśika's time the Devanātha Temple had two images of Hayagrīva for worship: (1) Yoga Hayagrīva, which is said to give the power of speech even to a dumb person; and (2) Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva, which is Hayagrīva accompanied by Viṣṇu's inseparable consort Śrī-Lakṣmī. The Yoga Hayagrīva remains till today in the Devanatha Temple, though the Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva is presently the presiding deity at the Vaṭakalai Parakāla

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[6] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997.

[7] Tradition has it that the Vaikhānasa Āgamas were written by Vikhāsa (a Vedic sage) under the guidance of Viṣṇu, whereas the Pāñcarātra Āgamas are believed to have been revealed by Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) Himself. The name Vaikhānasa means 'ritual fire', and these Āgamas possibly take their name from the forest hermits who performed fire rituals. Although the Vaikhānasa texts appear only in post-Vedic and post-Epic times, they are believed to be the oldest Vaiṣṇava literature. The Vaikhānasa tradition is mainly found in the Tamil and Telugu regions, and presently several important temples such as the ones at Tirupati, and Kāñcīpuram and the Śrīvaiṣṇava temple at Mathurā continue to be run according to Vaikhānasa practices. Jan Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, pp. 140-141.

According to some, Vaikhānasa is 'more' legitimate and orthodox, based on the fact that the Vaikhānasa tradition follows many Vedic principles and rituals represented in the *Taittirīya* branch of the *Black Yajur Veda*. The followers of Vaikhānasa consider Pāñcarātra unorthodox. Consequently, animosity has developed between the two sects of the Vaiṣṇava Āgamic tradition. Smith, *Vaiṣṇava Iconography: According to Pāñcarātrāgama Texts*, p. XXV and Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 141. Although there has been tension between the two Āgamic traditions, the only real difference between the Vaikhānasa and Pāñcarātra is their ritual practice. Smith, *Vaiṣṇava Iconography*, pp. XXV-XXVI. See also, Tuen Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom: A Ritual Handbook of the Vaikhānasa* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965).

According to Gonda, the main differences between the two Vaiṣṇava Āgamic groups are: (1) the Pāñcarātrins recite the Tamil Āḻvār hymns during worship, whereas Vaikhānasins do not; (2) unlike the Pāñcarātrins, Vaikhānasins do not have icons/images of the Āḻvārs or the Ācāryas; (3) although the Pāñcarātrins recognize Āṇṭāḷ as a consort of Viṣṇu, Vaikhānasins do not consider the possibility of an ordinary women attaining such status; (4) although both Pāñcarātrins and Śrīvaiṣṇavas brand their bodies as part of their initiation ritual (*pañca-saṃskāra*), Vaikhānasins do not; (5) differences in the Pāñcarātra and Vaikhānasa descriptions of Viṣṇu's attendant deities; and (6) Vaikhānasins give special prominence to Śrī as Viṣṇu's creative power (*śakti*). Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, pp.142-143.

Maṭha[8] in Mysore, where Hayagrīva, along with His consort, is worshipped with great devotion. Both of the images are of bronze and are movable. Significantly, the only Āḷvār poet who specifically sang in praise of the Devanātha Temple is Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār and he explicitly mentions Hayagrīva several times in his *Periya Tirumoḻi*.

The temple area is likewise connected with Vedānta Deśika, for it is here that he is said to have performed penance and received the grace of Garuḍa and Hayagrīva on the hill called Auṣadhagiri (the mountain of herbs), right next to the Devanātha Temple. There is an annual festival held during September-October celebrating Vedānta Deśika's association with the Devanātha Temple.[9]

The story of Vedānta Deśika's experience of Hayagrīva's grace on the Auṣadhagiri hill and his subsequent composition of the *Hayagrīva Stotra* served to popularize devotion to Lord Hayagrīva in the area. Consequently, around 1667 C.E., the Swami Hayagrīva Temple was built on Auṣadhagiri. Before describing the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple, I will provide an overview of the mythological history of the place contained in the *sthala-purāṇa*[10] of the Devanātha Temple and the local story about Vedānta Deśika.

1.1. *The* Sthala-purāṇa *of the Devanātha Temple, Tiruvahīndrapuram*

The *sthala-purāṇa* of the Devanātha Temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram claims to be based on the story from the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*. The *sthala-purāṇa*

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[8] According to tradition, the founder of the Parakāla Maṭha (Vaṭakalai) knew Vedānta Deśika in Kāñcīpuram. The Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva image was given as a donation to the Mysore royal family of Vodayars in return for having received from them temple offerings. See *Śrī Vaishnava Divya Deśams*, pp. 55-56.

[9] *Śrī Vaishnava Divya Deśams*, pp. 55-56. For information about the rituals and festivals at the Swami Hayagrīva temple, see the section below on 'Rituals at the Swami Hayagrīva Temple, Tiruvahīndrapuram'.

[10] *Sthala-purāṇa* (ancient story of a [sacred] place) (Tamil, *talapurāṇam*) is a collection of the local myths and legends of a specific pilgrimage place or temple. The religious stories reflect the particular traditions that have evolved around a shrine and its locale and, more importantly, account for its sanctity. The deity of each South Indian shrine has both a Tamil and a Sanskrit name. In the *sthala-purāṇa*, local myths are frequently connected with pan-Indian mythological history. See David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 4-9. "Tiruvahīntirapura Stalapurāṇam", in *Tiruvayintirapurattu Tirukkōyil* (Tiruvaheendirapuram: Śrī Devanatha Kainkarya Sabha, 1982), pp. 7-39.

genre typically attempts to connect local myth and legends with myths
from the classical Sanskrit Purāṇas, adapting certain of their stories to a
particular town, temple, and icon.

In the first chapter of the *sthala-purāṇa*, Nārada asks his father Brahmā
to teach him about the glory of Viṣṇu (Hari). Brahmā responds by narrating
the story of Hari-Viṣṇu's *arcā-avatāra*. Brahmā explains how Viṣṇu was
not found until the *ṛṣis* (such as Sanaka) went to Tiruvahīndrapuram. The
sthala-purāṇa then gives precise directions as to the location of the temple:

> Tiruvahīndrapuram is situated at six *yojanas* north of Kumbakonam, in a
> direction due southeast of Tirupati, due south of Kāñcīpuram and at a
> distance of half a *yojana* west of the sea.[11]

This is a typical *sthala-purāṇa* motif; the sages or gods are unable to find
the deity until they arrive at the specific place that is the subject of the
sthala-purāṇa. This motif has as its purpose the demonstration of the
sanctity and importance of the particular temple or shrine.

Upon arriving at Tiruvahīndrapuram, the *ṛṣis* are said to have seen their
Splendorous Viṣṇu holding the conch and discus, accompanied by His
consort Śrī Devī. Meanwhile, as the *ṛṣis* were praising the Lord, the sage
Mārkaṇḍeya asks the Lord to incarnate Himself in the form of an icon at
Tiruvahīndrapuram. In chapter three of the *sthala-purāṇa*, the sage Nārada
continues to ask his father Brahmā to narrate the glory of the icon named
Śrī Devanātha and the River Garuḍa. Brahmā then informs Nārada about
a certain sage who will receive the grace of Hayagrīva at this spot. One
passage in the *sthala-purāṇa* associates Vedānta Deśika both with the
Devanātha Temple and with Hayagrīva:

> In Kali *yuga*, a great sage, who would be an *avatāra* of Hari's bell, shall be
> doing penance under a *peepul* tree. He shall obtain the grace of Hayagrīva.
> The sage shall reside here for a long time and shall make his residence here.
> Even a bath in or sip of the water of the well shall beget all auspiciousness
> and *mokṣa*.[12]

Vedānta Deśika's attainment of the grace of Hayagrīva through penance is
presented as the central foundation for the importance and sanctity of the
Devanātha temple. This *sthala-purāṇa* clearly appears to have been written
after the time of Vedānta Deśika. Worshippers of Hayagrīva in Tamil Nadu

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[11] One *yojana* is equivalent to four *krośas* or approximately nine miles. Monier-William,
Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 858. The sea refers to the Bay of Bengal.

[12] Vedānta Deśika was named Veṅkaṭanātha (Lord of the Bell) by his parents, after the
main deity of the Tirupati Temple. "Tiruvahīntirapura Stalapurāṇam", p. 36.

today believe that it is through Hayagrīva's grace that Vedānta Deśika attained *mokṣa*.[13]

1.2. *The Local Vaṭakalai Story of Vedānta Deśika at Tiruvahīndrapuram*

The temple's *sthala-purāṇa* is supplemented by a number of local stories from the oral tradition which elaborate on Vedānta Deśika's sojourn at Tiruvahīndrapuram. According to T.K. Piran and Pandit Bhattachariar, Deśika, finding the nearby river congenial for his *tapas* (austerities), chose the area of the Devanātha Temple to meditate upon Hayagrīva. The Supreme is said to have appeared before him in the form of Hayagrīva, and blessed him with wisdom. Because of Vedānta Deśika's penance, Hayagrīva granted him knowledge and the faculty to compose the hymns. Hayagrīva's grace is believed to have enabled Vedānta Deśika to write many scholarly books.[14] Interestingly, Vedānta Deśika is said to have received Hayagrīva's grace by meditating on the *garuḍa-mantra* (given to him by his Ācārya Atreya Rāmānuja, who is considered to be an incarnation of Garuḍa). Here, we see the importance of the Vedas in Vedānta Deśika's spirituality: Viṣṇu's vehicle, the eagle-headed man Garuḍa, is regarded as the representation of the Vedas, and Hayagrīva is praised for having recovered the Vedas from the demons as well as being the source of the Vedas.

Vedānta Deśika was bestowed with a special title, *sarva-tantra-svatantra* (independent master of all the arts), by the community. The temple priests even today are most happy to expound on the many legends about Vedānta Deśika. To this day an image of Vedānta Deśika is found in the Devanātha Temple, in a separate shrine on the left side of the inner sanctum; according to tradition, this image was made by Vedānta Deśika himself. The account has it that Vedānta Deśika as a master of the arts was challenged by a sculptor to make an image of himself. Vedānta Deśika is said to have fulfilled this demand in order to prove his status as the master of the arts.[15]

Another fascinating legend tells us how Vedānta Deśika was tested for his cobbler skills and, surprisingly, he is believed to have made a fine pair of leather *chappals* (sandals). Vedānta Deśika's association with the

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[13] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997.
[14] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997.
[15] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997.

making of leather sandals is now used to legitimize Vaṭakalais' wearing of
leather *chappals* (whereas previously they only wore wooden shoes
because leather was taboo). As one of the temple priests put it: "Anything
connected with Vedānta Deśika has become sacred in Tiruvahīndra-
puram."[16]

The local stories about Vedānta Deśika cited above, not only depict him
as skilled in philosophy and the arts, but also reflect the deification process
of a great Ācārya, whereby he attains the status of an *anu-pravesa-avatāra*
(incarnation of an element of the Supreme). According to Śrīvaiṣṇavas, the
divine entered into Vedānta Deśika and made him an incarnate form of God
Himself. An *anu-pravesa-avatāra* can be worshipped either as the
possessor of divine qualities or as God Himself.[17] In the case of Vedānta
Deśika, his image is worshipped now at the Devanātha Temple as both
Ācārya and God.[18]

It is highly significant that, when I tried to raise the issue about the
ambivalent nature of Hayagrīva (including the horse-headed demon killed
by Viṣṇu, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, *Devībhāgavata* and *Kālikā
Purāṇas*), there was great reluctance to even consider the subject. It was
clear that to broach such a subject—the possibility that a horse-headed
figure might have had malevolent qualities—was inappropriate. Such an
image of Hayagrīva is completely foreign to the Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view
and theology, for God in His many forms is wholly benevolent.

1.3. *The Local Living Tradition of Hayagrīva Worship: The Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram*

The hill that rises next to the Devanātha Temple is known as *Auṣadhagiri*.
There are now seventy-four steps up the hill that lead to the Swami
Hayagrīva Temple (previously, and in Vedānta Deśika's time, there was
only a path up to the top of the hill). The seventy-four steps were
constructed leading to the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple in order to represent
the number of propagator-teachers that Rāmānuja himself had appointed.[19]

The Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple was built around 1667 C.E., thus it is

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[16] From an interview with T.K. Piran, January 24, 1997.

[17] Srinivasa S.M. Chari, *Vaiṣṇavism: Its Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Discipline*
(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 218.

[18] *Śrī Vaishnava Divya Deśams*, pp. 55-56.

[19] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997.

only about 330 years old and is relatively new for a temple in the Tamil lands. Auṣadhagiri is an ideal place for a temple; the Āgamas advocate the construction of temples near a river or on top of a hill, and it meets both of these requirements. Nevertheless, Auṣadhagiri's greatest claim to fame is the place where Vedānta Deśika received the grace of Hayagrīva. There are four *mūla-beras* (immoveable fixed images) at the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple. The central image is of Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva. On His right side stands Venugopāla (Kṛṣṇa with a flute), and on His left is Garuḍa. The image of Garuḍa has a unique feature among Garuḍa icons: one hand is in the *upadeśa-mudrā*, because it was Garuḍa (Atreya Rāmānuja) who gave the mantra to Vedānta Deśika.[20]

According to Pandit Neelameha Bhattachariar, the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple was renovated in 1881 C.E. by P.L. Punnarangan. A few years later (1892 C.E.), a Hayagrīva *maṇḍapa* (a covered shrine that is part of the temple) was constructed on top of the hill at the place where Vedānta Deśika is believed to have performed his *tapas*. There are inscriptions at the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple relating to the construction of the *maṇḍapa* as well as the later renovation of the temple.[21] The inscriptions demonstrate

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[20] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997.

[21] There are seven temple inscriptions dating from 1873 to 1961 C.E.:

1873	The bed chamber was constructed by Raṅkammāḷ, wife of Cuppuṟāya Ceṭṭiyār, belonging to Putuvai (the old name of Pondicherry).
1875	The well on the hill is the *tarma* (Sanskrit, *dharma*) [religious duty, thus donation] of Cuppuṟāya Ceṭṭiyār, belonging to Putuvai.
1879	On the hill belonging to Putuvai the five sons of Muṉicāmi Ceṭṭiyār (1) Kōpāl Ceṭṭiyār, (2) Irākava Ceṭṭiyār, (3) Kiṣanappa Ceṭṭiyār, (4) Cāmi Ceṭṭiyār and (5) Kurunāta Ceṭṭiyār.
1881	Central *maṇṭapa* (Sanskrit, *maṇḍapa*) at Hayagrīva temple. It is the *tarma* of Ku. Nārāyaṇa Cāmi Tāsaṉ, belonging to Putuvai.
1885	The planting of different kinds of trees is the *tarma* of Apirāmi Ammā belonging to Vaḷavanūr Kumāra Kuppam, wife of Appāvu Uṭaiyār and mother of Varatarāja Uṭaiyār.
1892	On the southern side of the Hayagrīva temple is a four pillared *maṇṭapa*. It is the *tarma* of Mācilā Maṇipiṉṉai, belonging to Putuvai, Kārāmaṇik Kuppam.
1961	The southern direction of the Śrī Hayakrīva svāmi saṉṉati (Sanskrit, *samadhi*) and the eastern side of the *maṇṭapa* was renovated, [also] a front *maṇṭapa* of four pillars was added. All of these services were offered by Paṅkūr, Śrī Māṉakaḷ Maṅkaṉirām [an industrialist belonging to Diddvana (Rajasthan)]. Ācārya of the latter is chief of Uttara (northern) Ahobila Maṭha Ācārya Vīṇā Rakavan. The trustee of the temple is Śrī Kō. Taṉakōṭi Paṭaiyākṣiyar, with great devotion.

Tiruvayintirapurattu Tirukkōyil, pp. 65-67. I am indebted to K.K.A. Venkatachari for the

how the worship of Hayagrīva is, indeed, local; for example, seven of the eight donors are from the South Arcot District (five of them lived in Putuvai [Pondicherry]). Although there is one donor from Rajasthan, he is a Vaṭakalai "who has settled in the north". The latter fact demonstrates how important Hayagrīva is to devotees of the Vaṭakalai sect and the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition of devotees identifying themselves with the *divya-deśa* closest to their natal place. Even when Vaṭakalais leave the Tamil lands, they continue to associate with, and be devoted to, Hayagrīva and Vedānta Deśika.

1.4. *Rituals at the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple, Tiruvahīndrapuram*

Utsava (literally, remover of obstacles or misery) means festival. The proper performance of festive religious observances is believed to generate power that affects the cosmic and psychic forces. In effect, it reaps fruits for the sponsor and/or for the community as a whole. There are three general categories of temple rituals or festivals: (1) *nitya-utsava* (also referred to as *pūjā* or *arcanā-karma*) are the daily, weekly, and/or monthly rituals regularly performed in a temple; (2) *naimittika-utsava* are the annual observances for special occasions like harvest, marriage and birthdates of the patron of the temple; and (3) *kāmya-utsavas* are rites observed for special and specific reasons; i.e., boons, thanksgiving, atonement and the like.[22]

   The *nitya-utsava* is performed at the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. People in Tiruvahīndrapuram and its surrounding region also worship Hayagrīva in a special way every Thursday. In pan-Indian Hinduism, Thursday is the special day of Bṛhaspati (the god of learning). Śrīvaiṣṇavas in the Tiruvahīndrapuram area especially meditate on Hayagrīva, who is also revered as the god of learning, on that day. Likewise, functionally, for Vaṭakalais, the worship of Hayagrīva at the beginning of *pūjā* takes the place of the worship of the non-sectarian goddess of learning Sarasvatī. Vaiṣṇavas pray only to Vaiṣṇava deities, and Hayagrīva has come to

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translation.
   [22] H. Daniel Smith, "Festivals in Pāñcarātra Literature", in *Religious Festivals in South India and Śrī Laṅkā*, ed. by Guy R. Welborn and Glenn E. Yocum (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982), pp. 27-49.

acquire the function earlier ascribed to Sarasvatī as the bestower of knowledge.

For Śrīvaiṣṇavas, Hayagrīva is functionally aligned with the worship of Sarasvatī in another way: on the eve of Vijyadaśmi, which takes place at the end of the Navarātri celebrations—the traditional autumnal equinox (*kanyā saṃkrānti*[23])—people come and worship Hayagrīva as the God of Learning. In other regions of Tamil Nadu, the day is widely celebrated among non-Vaiṣṇavas with the Sarasvatī *pūjā*. On that day, however, Śrīvaiṣṇavas come to Tiruvahīndrapuram to worship Hayagrīva in her place. Many students start school from that day onwards, since the worship of Hayagrīva, the Lord of Learning, is considered as the most auspicious time to commence study. There is also a monthly worship of Hayagrīva at the temple during the time of the *śrāvaṇa* star (night of the full moon in the month of July-August). During the time of the *śrāvaṇa* star, the bronze *utsava-bera* of Hayagrīva is taken from the Devanātha Temple along with the image of Vedānta Deśika to the top of the hill. This ceremony is known *maṅgala-śaṃsana* ('the act of wishing for joy').

The *brahmā-utsava* (also called *mahā-utsava*) is an annual Hindu temple festival which may last from one up to thirty days. The celebration occurs in order to mark the day of the consecration of the temple or of its icon. Annually, during the *brahmā-utsava* festival in Tiruvahīndrapuram, Śrīvaiṣṇavas recite Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* as part of the temple ritual.[24] According to the priests in Tiruvahīndrapuram, the local people celebrate Hayagrīva for ten days in the month of Āvaṇi (Tamil month of mid-August to mid-September). During this festival, the image of Hayagrīva is not taken out in proccession, but worshipped only in the sanctum itself.

Often, people present themselves at the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple with requests for healing from diseases, especially those of the eye. People who seek healing from illness, or want good education, or desire success in business endeavours, are frequent boon-seeking visitors to the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple. Because Hayagrīva is the Lord of Learning and is

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[23] The traditional autumnal equinox (*kanyā saṃkrānti*) is in the tenth lunar phase (*tithi* 'lunar phase' which refers to the moon travelling twelve degrees; the moon cycle of fifteen phases is equivalent to a fortnight) during the month of *āśvina* (third week of October to second week of November). Karen L. Merrey, "The Hindu Festival Calendar", in *Religious Festivals in South India and Śrī Laṅkā*, ed. by Guy R. Welborn and Glenn E. Yocum (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982), p. 2.

[24] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997. See also Singh, *Vedānta Deśika*, pp. 13-20, 50-54.

believed to be powerful in the fulfillment of all worldly desires, He is a popular form of God to pray to for boons, especially those regarding education and business. According to Pandit Bhattachariar, even Muslims are frequent visitors to the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple, although they are not allowed to enter in the inner sanctum of the temple.[25]

2. Śrīvaiṣṇava Devotional Hymns in Praise of Hayagrīva

There are three Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional hymns (in Sanskrit) specifically addressed to Hayagrīva: *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti* (*The Praise of the Root Mantra of Śrī Hayagrīva*), *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti* (*Self-Surrender to Hayavadana Accompanied by Śrī Lakṣmī*), and the *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana* (*Morning Prayer to Śrī Hayagrīva*). All three of the hymns refer to the mythic history of Hayagrīva as *avatāra*; however, they appear to have been written only after Hayagrīva was established as Supreme and installed as icon (*arcā-avatāra*) in Tiruvahīndrapuram. The hymns reflect the importance of the recitation of mantra/*stotra* in Śrīvaiṣṇava ritual and theology. The Śrīvaiṣṇava ritual practices delineated below are the foundation of the popular devotional texts to Hayagrīva under discussion here. Hymns such as these are often ignored by scholars because they are not written in a sophisticated form of Sanskrit, or because they do not incorporate the intellectual dimension of Hinduism (as in the case of philosophical texts). However, they constitute the very heart of Hindu religion, since they reflect popular belief and worship. These devotional poems are found in pamphlets, obtainable cheaply at the entrance to every South Indian temple. These types of hymns are one of the most common mediums through which ordinary people gain religious knowledge and derive their world-view.[26] The three aforementioned Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns are reflective of Śrīvaiṣṇava ritual based on the Āgamic tradition: the recitation of the mantra, the performance of *prapatti* 'self-surrender', and the daily morning ritual of *abhigamana* (approaching the deity).

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[25] From an interview with T.K. Piran and Neelameha Bhattachariar, January 24, 1997.

[26] Music is also a medium of popular religious devotion. The Bombay Sisters, who are famous Tamilian singers of religious music in Mumbai, have recorded an audio-cassette entitled *Lakshmi Hayagreeva Stotramaala*.

2.1. Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti[27]
(In Praise of the Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra)

Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti reflects the influence of Pāñcarātra ritual on Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The receiving of the *mūla-mantra* (principal, primary, or fundamental mantra), which contains the name Nārāyaṇa and is known as the *tiru-mantra*,[28] is the fourth rite in *pañca-saṃskāra*.[29] The encyclopedic Purāṇas *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (1.34) and *Nārada Purāṇa* (3.72) mention the worship of Hayagrīva with the *mūla-mantra*.[30] Although in Śrīvaiṣṇava initiation rites, the *mūla-mantra* is concerned with Nārāyaṇa, *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti*, imitative of that mantra, is concerned with Hayagrīva. This hymn has as its subject the praise of the Hayagrīva *mūla-mantra* and asserts God's supremacy.

   Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti consists of both salutations to Hayagrīva and requests for the attainment of worldly fruits. According to the important Śrīvaiṣṇava manual called *Yatīndramatadīpika* 8.22, there are two types of *prapannas* (devotees who have performed *prapatti* 'surrender'): (1) *ekāntin*, one who seeks refuge (*śaraṇam*) with Viṣṇu for both liberation and worldly fruits, and (2) *parama-ekāntin*, one who desires

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[27] *Śrī Hayagrīva-Paṭalam* (compiled by G.D. Somani) (Bombay: n.p., n.d.), pp. 31-34.

[28] 'Oṃ, Salutations to Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu)' (*Oṃ namo nārāyaṇāya*).

[29] *Pañca-saṃskāra* is comprised of five simple rites of initiation into the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition (also known as the Śrīvaiṣṇava sacraments): (1) *tāpa*, the application by branding the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* emblems on the shoulders; (2) *puṇḍra*, the application of the forehead marks with white clay on the initiate; (3) *nāma*, naming the initiate as *Viṣṇu-dāsa* ('servant of Viṣṇu'); (4) *mantra*, the preceptor gives the esoteric Vaiṣṇava *mantras* to the initiate; and, finally, (5) *ijyā*, the initiate receives instruction in the formal worship of God (icon or *śālagrama* stones). Chari, *Vaiṣṇavism*, pp. 307-311.

[30] He [the devotee] shall repeat the following mystic words, '*udgirat Oṃ udgītha sarva-vāgīśvara* (Lord of all speech)', then he shall repeat *sarvavedamaya* (O deity identical with all the Vedas) *acintya* (the inconceivable) *sarvam bodhayam bodhaya* (enlighten, enlighten everything). The *mantra* begins with *tāra* (Oṃ). Its sage is Brahmā, the metre is *anuṣṭup* and the deity is Hayagrīva, the lord who bestows speech and prosperity. He shall conceive the five *aṅgas* by uttering *Oṃ* and the (four) quarters of the *mantra*. He shall then meditate on the deity, 'I salute the *Horse-faced lord* whose lustre is equal to that of the snow-capped mountain, who is bedecked in garlands and *tulasī* leaves and whose high region is that of speech.' ... (*Nārada Purāṇa* 3.72.32-36). After worshipping the *Horse-faced deity* thus for fifteen times he shall become equal to the lord of speech in fluency of speech and the lord of wealth by means of his riches. When the mantra has been achieved thus the repeater of the mantra can apply it to practical purpose. He shall charge pure water with the mantra one thousand and eight times and for a month with the *mūla-mantra* (*Nārada Purāṇa* 3.72.46-48).

only knowledge of, and devotion to, God. *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti* is continuous with the first type (even though for Śrīvaiṣṇavas the *parama-ekāntin* is the preferred type of devotee). This hymn, then, reflects the popular element in its emphasis on worldly fruits. It asks both for the removal of evil, such as demons, and for the provision of good health and fortune (v. 4). Some stanzas describe Hayagrīva in words that would appear to be imitative of Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*: "Salutations, to the Great Horse-headed One whose radiance shines like a crystal bulb of red coral" (v. 13). Most significantly, there is a stanza in the hymn that is taken directly from Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* (v. 4):

> [As] the dawn [arises]
> [in] the east
> after any night,
> [so] the new light [shines out]
> from the black collyrium [-lined] eye of wisdom.
>
> May the incarnation of Vāsudeva,
> the Expounder of the Vedas,
> who is called the Lord of Speech,
> and has the face of a horse
> appear before me! (v. 15)

Although the insertion of Vedānta Deśika's stanza in this popular hymn would be considered as plagiarism in the West, in the Indian context it attests to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas' great esteem for Vedānta Deśika and his *Hayagrīva Stotra* in that it honours the one from whom the words have been taken.

Although not following the classical form of a *phala-śruti* (fruits of reciting the text), the last stanza of *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti* does, however, make the claim that Hayagrīva destroys inner darkness and provides everything to His devotees. This can be interpreted to mean that Hayagrīva grants both the material and the spiritual desires of a devotee. As in Vedānta Deśika's poem, Hayagrīva here has a dual role as the giver of boons and of *mokṣa*.

2.2. Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti[31]
(Self-Surrender to Hayavadana Accompanied by Śrī Lakṣmī)

Prapatti (self-surrender to God) and *kaiṅkarya* (service of God) are central to Śrīvaiṣṇava Bhakti. According to Śrīvaiṣṇava thought, the devotee can take refuge only with the Supreme and full form of God,[32] and thus here the 'fullness' of Viṣṇu's form as Hayagrīva is once again affirmed. *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti* (*Self-Surrender to Hayagrīva Accompanied by Śrī Lakṣmī*), a hymn of twelve stanzas, is an expression of the devotee's surrender to Hayagrīva. Each stanza begins with the verse "I bow down to the God Hayagrīva who is my refuge" (*saranyam devam hayagrīvam ahaṃ prapadye*). The act of *prapatti* is performed before an icon and, accordingly, this type of hymn is specifically meant to be recited in the presence of an icon. Indeed, this hymn takes for granted the iconic form of Hayagrīva as ontologically equal to the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.

   The hymn also refers to the myth of the malevolent act of the stealing of the Vedas by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, who sprung from two drops from the lotus that arose out of Viṣṇu's navel.

> I bow down to Lord Hayagrīva
>   who is a refuge for all beings;
>
> the forms Madhu and Kaiṭabha
> both arose out of two drops of nectar
>   [flowing from the Lord's navel]
> which fell from the stem of the lotus
> [giving them] the qualities of *rajas* and *tamas*,
>   which caused them to steal the Vedas.(v.5)

This reference parallels the story found in both the *Mahābhārata* (12.335.1-64) and the *Hayaśīrṣa Saṃhitā* (chapter 1), which relate this particular episode of Hayagrīva's *avatāric* form. This demonstrates that, while the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition regards Deśika's *stotra* as the foundational text on Hayagrīva, it does move beyond it to original sources. The hymn, like Vedānta Deśika, also praises Hayagrīva as the full form of God who bestows knowledge and guides devotees towards *mokṣa*:

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[31] *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi* (Madras: Ubhaya Vedānta Granthamala, 1971), p. 110.

[32] Piḷḷai Lokācārya, *Śrīvacana Bhūṣaṇa of Piḷḷai Lokācārya* (translation by Robert C. Lester) (Madras: The Kuppuswamy Shastri Research Institute, 1979).

I bow down to Lord Hayagrīva
who is a refuge for all beings;

who is the Lord of Learning
Madhusūdana (Slayer of Madhu)
the One who provides the interest
  in the highest goal of *mokṣa*
  to those who are born in this world. (v.7)

Similar to the *Hayagrīva Stotra* and *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti*,
Hayagrīva is described in this hymn as having the dual role of Granter of
boons and *mokṣa*.

   Whereas in the *Hayagrīva Stotra* there is only an implicit understanding
of Hayagrīva's iconic form, with the greater emphasis on mental
concentration, the final stanza (*dhyāna-śloka*) of this hymn accompanied
by Śrī Lakṣmī clearly describes Hayagrīva as *arcā-avatāra*:

I bow down to Lord Hayagrīva
who is a refuge for all beings;

who, seated on the white lotus,
bears in His hands the conch (*dara*), wheel (*cakra*), book (*kośa*)
  and has the hand position of exposition (*vyākhyāna-mudrā*)
[and] who has Lakṣmī, the form of knowledge (*vidyās*),
  on His left side. (v. 12)

Following Vedanta Deśika's *Śata Dūṣaṇi* (*sutra* 42), in the later
Śrīvaiṣṇava depictions Hayagrīva is more commonly accompanied by
Lakṣmī. This is also evident at the Swami Hayagrīva temple at
Tiruvahīndrapuram, wherein Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva is the presiding deity
(*arcā-avatāra*).

2.3. Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana[33] (Morning Prayer to Śrī Hayagrīva)

Once initiated into Śrīvaiṣṇavism by means of *pañca-saṃskāra*, the
devotee is then obligated to perform a series of daily rituals. In *Rahasya
Traya Sāra*, Vedānta Deśika advocates the Āgamic six-fold discipline of
surrender to God, the final step being *ātma-nikṣepa*, the act of total
surrender to the care of God.[34] He refers to *Jayākhya Saṃhitā* 22.68, which

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[33] *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi*, pp. 107-109.
[34] *Rahasya Traya Sāra* XI.

divides the day into five parts, with the daily religious routine outlined accordingly. This routine, to be performed daily, is called the *pañcakāla-prakriyā* (five daily religious duties): (1) *abhigamana* (morning prayer), (2) *upadāna* (collection of materials for worship), (3) *ijyā* (worship of God), (4) *svādhyāya* (recitation/study of sacred lore), and (5) *yoga* (contemplation of God).

The term for the ritual act of *abhigamana* comes from the Sanskrit verbal root *abhi+gam* which means 'to go near, to approach'. The literal meaning of *abhigamana* is 'approaching', and the *abhigamana* ritual refers to the act of approaching God with devotion each morning. It is the first of the five obligatory daily rituals that a Śrīvaiṣṇava must perform. After bathing and drawing the Śrīvaiṣṇava mark representing the feet of Viṣṇu on his/her forehead, the devotee begins the day by 'approaching' God (either in a temple or at the home shrine) in order to seek His grace and in order to be able to fulfil his/her daily religious duties properly. This discipline is the devotee's demonstration of complete subservience and reliance upon the Supreme. For the devotee, it is the daily re-enactment of the salvific surrender (*prapatti*) of the ego to Viṣṇu.

Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana is a thirteen-stanza hymn that describes Hayagrīva as an *avatāra* whom one is to approach with great devotion. As with the aforementioned *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti*, the hymn is meant to be recited in front of an icon. The first stanza describes the act of approaching Hayagrīva thus:

> I approach with devotion Hayagrīva
> the One who [emanates] from the body of Aniruddha,
> whose nature is strength,
> the destroyer of the difficulties of Brahmā,
> the Lord of Lakṣmī,
> and the One who has the neck of a horse (Hayagrīva). (v. 1)

This stanza not only refers to Hayagrīva's benevolent act of recovering the Vedas (as the destroyer of Brahmā's difficulties), but it further depicts Hayagrīva as accompanied by Lakṣmī. This text is continuous with *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* (chapter 13), and moves beyond Deśika's poem to the Āgamas by describing Him as having sprung out from Viṣṇu's *vyūha* Aniruddha. Yet, Hayagrīva's theological status herein is devoid of the ambiguities contained in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. Rather, this hymn is consistent with Vedānta Deśika's depictions of Hayagrīva as the full form of Lord Viṣṇu.

The stanza that follows is in the form of a *suprabhātam* (an auspicious

good morning), which is recited at the time of the awakening of the Lord as if the icon is a living being. The Sanskrit genre of the *suprabhātam* is based on the Tamil hymn Tiruppaḷḷiyḷucci by Periyāḷvār. *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana* (v. 2) reads thus:

> At this time, when the sun destroys the darkness,
> by causing the blooming of all the lotuses
> and awaking everyone
> with His own [rays],
> [we] set out for the One,
>   seated on the white lotus,
> to praise and fix [our hearts] upon Him.
>
> O, auspicious morning (*suprabhātam*) to You
> Lord with the face of a horse. (v. 2)

Two stanzas of *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana* make explicit reference to the Epic and Purāṇic myth of the benevolent *avatāra* who recovers the Vedas from Madhu and Kaiṭabha: "the feet of the glorious Horse-faced One ... carefully wandered about searching for Madhu and Kaiṭabha in the ocean, recovered the Vedas, and with reverence disseminated them." (v. 4), and "having killed the thieves Madhu and Kaiṭabha, and having restored the Vedas quickly [to Brahmā], You were able to protect the entire world." (v. 6).

Following Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*, this text, although containing a couple of references to the myth of the benevolent Hayagrīva, has many more depictions of His association with wisdom and speech.

> The mind races like a monkey
> overpowered by external senses.
> How can I meditate upon You, lustrous Horse-faced One?
>
> Hayagrīva's Word is
> sweet, excellent and auspicious,
> superior to the abounding and continuous flow
> of the heavenly Ganges
>   in the most splendid pilgrimage place. (v. 8)

Although He is praised for bestowing the power of speech, Hayagrīva is also described as removing the difficulties of His devotees and the 'lower' gods. The final stanza (*phala-śruti*) states that those who concentrate on the deity by reciting this hymn will attain happiness as well as intelligence, good character, auspicious qualities and all "other flowers".

3. ROLE OF HAYAGRĪVA IN CONTEMPORARY TAMIL NADU

According to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, Tiruvahīndrapuram is one of the one hundred and eight *divya-deśas*. People who come to visit the Devanātha Temple also visit the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple and vice-versa. Even today, pilgrims to Tiruvahīndrapuram are shown the seat where Vedānta Deśika is said to have composed and then recited the *Hayagrīva Stotra*.

Hayagrīva became important in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, especially among the Vaṭakalais, primarily as a result of Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. Consequently, Śrīvaiṣṇavas' understanding of Hayagrīva's role and status is based primarily on Vedānta Deśika's poem, which is reflected in the short hymns composed subsequently. The present study of the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple and the analysis of the later Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns shed further light on the development of Hayagrīva in the Vaṭakalai sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The *Hayagrīva Stotra* is a poem with an emphasis on the *antaryāmin* and *vibhava-avatāric* forms of the God; the Swami Hayagrīva Temple and the Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns depict more explicitly the horse-headed deity as a full form of Viṣṇu who appears in iconic form. Śrīvaiṣṇava *topotheism* is thus foundational to the history of Hayagrīva in Tamil Nadu. The small popular devotional hymns directed to the icon, the development of the worship of Hayagrīva at Tiruvahīndrapuram (which gains its status through the poems of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Vedānta Deśika), the connection (whether historical or partially legendary) between Vedānta Deśika and Tiruvahīndrapuram, the more recent construction of the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple on Auṣadhagiri, and the spread elsewhere of devotion to Vedānta Deśika among Vaṭakalais—all these have made for a strong local tradition of devotion to Hayagrīva. That this local tradition spread beyond South Arcot to other regions of Tamil Nadu is evidenced by the Hayagrīva image at the Vedānta Deśika temple at Madurai and the temple inscription at the Swāmi Hayagrīva temple concerning a donor from Rajasthan.

According to T.K. Piran, Hayagrīva became popular among the Vaṭakalais because of Vedānta Deśika and his *Hayagrīva Stotra*,[35] and this study reveals no evidence to the contrary. Still, while the people of Tiruvahīndrapuram and the greater South Arcot district of Tamil Nadu have a deep devotion to Hayagrīva and believe Him to be a powerful god who

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[35] From an interview with T.K. Piran, January 24, 1997.

fulfils all worldly desires and even gives *mokṣa*, the popularity of
Hayagrīva has for the most part remained local.

In Tamil Nadu, Hayagrīva was represented in stone or metal only very
occasionally before the 12th or 13th century. According to Champaka-
lakshmi, one of the panels on the northern wall of the central shrine of
Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ Temple (ca. 8th century C.E.) in Kāñcīpuram contains
a representation of Hayagrīva in the standing position with His upper left
and right hands carrying the *śaṅkha* and the *cakra*; His lower left hand is
in the *kāṭyāvalambita* position (the lower right hand is damaged). Above
the horse-headed figure are four other figures that are believed to be the
representations of the four Vedas. In front of Hayagrīva there is an image
whom some have identified as the sage Agastya (before whom Hayagrīva
appears as a teacher, according to chapter 5 in the *Lalitā Māhātmya*, and
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa).[36] Likewise, there is an image of Hayagrīva at the
Varadarāja Perumāḷ Temple at Kāñcīpuram wherein he has two arms in the
position of *namaskāra* (greeting or reverence). Again, facing Hayagrīva
there is a figure who has been tentatively identified as Sage Agastya. There
is a small shrine in a *maṇḍapa* of the Raṅganātha Perumāḷ Temple at
ŚrīRaṅgam that contains a Hayagrīva figure. Here, Hayagrīva has four
arms: two bearing the *śaṅkha* (conch shell) and *cakra* (discus), and the
other two in the hand positions (*mudrā*) of *abhaya* (fearlessness) and
varada (boon-bestowing).

Later representations (after 13th century C.E.) of Hayagrīva in stone or
metal show him with four arms (1) in the *yogāsana* position, carrying the
śaṅkha and *cakra* in the upper hands, with the lower hands reposed on his
knees bound by a *yogapāṭṭa*, or (2) the *lalitesana* position, with Lakṣmī on
His left, carrying the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in His upper hands with His right
lower hand in the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* (hand position of exposition).[37]

Although several of the early images of Hayagrīva date at least from the
time of the Āḻvārs in Tamil Nadu, nowhere in these ancient temples is
Hayagrīva a presiding deity. This is not surprising, for, based on the fact
that many of the Purāṇas and Āgamas present the horse-headed figure as
a minor or secondary form. However, one may ask: if Hayagrīva was so
central to Vedānta Deśika—who was subsequently viewed as the most
important Ācārya of the Vaṭakalai sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism—and to the people
of the region in and around Tiruvahīndrapuram, why is there relatively
little visibility of Hayagrīva in temples in other areas of Tamil Nadu? One

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[36] Champakalakshmi, *Vaiṣṇava Iconography in the Tamil Country*, pp. 164-165.
[37] Champakalakshmi, *Vaiṣṇava Iconography in the Tamil Country*, pp. 164-165.

important reason may be that many temples are actually under the control of Teṉkalais, who not only do not follow the tradition of Vedānta Deśika, but actually look down upon the Vaṭakalai sect. It is also important to note that, according to the *Vaṭakalai Guruparamparā Prabhāvam (3000)*, Vedānta Deśika himself does not appear to have been much involved with temple activities in any of the places he lived, nor is he believed to have attracted large audiences with his public religious discourses.[38]

Moreover, the Ācāryas of the Vaṭakalai sect emphasize the intellectual aspect of the tradition, as did Vedānta Deśika himself. Unlike the Teṉkalais, the Vaṭakalais' involvement in temple building and administration is a relatively recent phenomenon.[39] Only in the last one to two hundred years (18th century, around the time of the actual split in Śrīvaiṣṇavism) has the Vaṭakalai sect been in control of several temples, such as the Varadarāja Temple at Kāñcīpuram (the birth place of Vedānta Deśika) and the Devanātha and Hayagrīva Temples at Tiruvahīndrapuram, where Vedānta Deśika performed penance, attained wisdom, and experienced the grace of Hayagrīva.

There is a relatively recent Vedānta Deśika Temple in Madurai which has an icon of Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva at the entrance tower gate. Similarily, R.S. Chari, IAS, a retired chief secretary of Pondicherry state and a devotee of Hayagrīva "because He is the God of Vedānta Deśika", has recently (1980s) built a Hayagrīva Temple in Pondicherry. According to his wife, Mrs. Chari, "the *Hayagrīva Stotra* is fundamental to the worship of Hayagrīva and Hayagrīva is an important God because of Vedānta Deśika".[40] The main icon is Yoga-Hayagrīva, but the temple is filled with many different icons and pictures of Hayagrīva.

4. CONCLUSION

Although there are several references to Hayagrīva in South Indian literature prior to Vedānta Deśika and His image is found in several temples, Hayagrīva became more popular in Tamil Nadu only after Vedānta Deśika's experience of His grace and the composition by him of

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[38] *Guruparamparā Prabhāvam of Brahmatantra Svatantra Jīyar*, pp. 145-151.; Mumme, *The Śrīvaiṣṇava Theological Dispute*, p. 13.

[39] Venkatachari, *The Maṇipravāḷa Literature Of The Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas*, pp. 165-166.

[40] Interview with Mrs. R.S. Chari at Pondicherry, January 24, 1997, who kindly conducted me through the Hayagrīva temple at Ramakṛṣṇapuram, Pondicherry.

the *Hayagrīva Stotra*. Indeed, Vedānta Deśika's poem and association with Hayagrīva not only led to the Vaṭakalai popularization of the horse-headed deity, but elevated Him to be worshipped as a 'full form' of God who can be approached for both mundane fruits and for *mokṣa*. It is in the post-Vedānta Deśika era that we see the development of a strong local tradition of devotion to Hayagrīva and an even more explicit Śrīvaiṣṇava *topotheistic* conceptualization of Hayagrīva; Hayagrīva is revered as the 'full form' of Viṣṇu, with Whom one may take refuge in His form as *arcā-avatāra*, and before Whom one may perform the daily worship rituals.

Once only an auxiliary icon present in Tiruvahīndrapuram's Devanātha Temple, Hayagrīva was subsequently honoured by a separate temple (built ca. 1667 C.E.) in which He, accompanied by His consort Śrī Lakṣmī, is the presiding deity. The shorter Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns analyzed in this chapter, appropriate as they are for iconic worship, take for granted Hayagrīva's status as a full form of Viṣṇu incarnated in an icon. This last point is further highlighted in Chapter Eight, which provides an analysis of several short hymns used by Śrīvaiṣṇavas that employ pan-Indian Vedic and Āgamic literary genres. I demonstrate there how once a deity attains local popularity—the local Śrīvaiṣṇava development of the worship of Hayagrīva as Supreme—the phenomenon may then be linked back to the pan-Indian context.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LINKING OF REGIONAL DEVOTION
TO PAN-INDIAN RELIGION:
FIVE SHORT ĀGAMIC RITUAL TEXTS ON HAYAGRĪVA

Although the actual part played by the Vedas in the development of Hindu belief and ritual is highly ambiguous and remains the subject of debate, the Vedas continue to be pivotal to Hinduism. They are revered as *śruti*—eternal, sacred, and authoritative. Accordingly, they serve as a basis for the legitimization of new beliefs and practices. Sectarian traditions sometimes imitatively employ traditional Vedic and other pan-Indian literary genres in order to endow pan-Indian legitimacy on local religious developments. Indeed, in this manner, they aim to become part of the pan-Indian mainstream. Interestingly, this process is evident in respect of the local Vaṭakalai development of the worship of Hayagrīva as the Supreme in Tiruvahīndrapuram. The effort to link the regional devotion to Hayagrīva as the Supreme to the pan-Indian worship of Him is manifest not only in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*, a Sanskrit poem in a pan-Indian genre, but also in five short Āgamic ritual texts about Hayagrīva.

These five short ritual texts,[1] even as they celebrate the local Śrīvaiṣṇava theme of Hayagrīva as Supreme, are imitative of literary genres from pan-Indian Hinduism. The five ritual texts on Hayagrīva are: (1) *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*, (2) *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma Arcanā* (*The Worship of the One Hundred and Eight Names of Hayagrīva*), (3) *Hayagrīva Kavaca* (*Hayagrīva [Protective] Shield*), (4) *Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat* (*Another Hayagrīva [Protective] Shield*), and (5) *Hayagrīva Pañjara* (*Hayagrīva [Protective] Cage*). These Āgamic ritual texts on Hayagrīva are modelled after literary genres found in the Vedic corpus (the Upaniṣads), the Epics

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[1] While the five ritual texts on Hayagrīva discussed in this chapter do not correspond to the five different genres, it is interesting to note that the number five appears as representative of the hymns of the particular deity. According to Bühnemann, it is not clear if the classification of the 'worship with five limbs' (*pañcāṅgasevana*: *gītā*, *sahasranāma*, *stava* [*rāja*], *kavaca*, and *hṛdaya*) or 'five genres' (*pañcāṅgas*) in Tantric literature corresponds to practical worship or whether they represent the totality of literature available on a particular deity. Gudrun Bühnemann, "Some Remarks on the Structure and Application of Hindu Sanskrit Stotras", *Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*, Vol. 28 (Vienna: 1984), pp. 73-104; 83-84. Tuen Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), p. 156.

(*The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu*), and in the pan-Indian Tantric tradition
(the *kavaca* and *pañjara*). Like the Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns discussed in the
previous chapter, these unauthored (and hence divine) texts are difficult to
date precisely, but they were more than likely composed in Tamil Nadu
after Vedānta Deśika and the establishment of the Swāmi Hayagrīva
Temple.

   The first two parts of this chapter present an overview of these ritual
texts on Hayagrīva. The treatment of Hayagrīva therein demonstrates as a
whole, in the first instance, how generic literary genres are used to
legitimate and celebrate late sectarian themes (such as the development of
Hayagrīva as the 'full' incarnation of Viṣṇu) in order to present them as if
they were well-established within pan-Indian Hinduism. The third part
consists of an analysis of the contents of these ritual texts in the light of
Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. It makes evident again the linking of
the regional devotion of Śrīvaiṣṇavism to pan-Indian religion. Although
these short ritual texts reflect an Āgamic form of devotion, unlike the
references to Hayagrīva in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (as seen in Chapter
Four) these compositions depict Hayagrīva as the *Protector of His devotees*
and, more significantly, *consistently establish Him as Supreme* (in line with
Śrīvaiṣṇava theology). However, these Āgamic texts differ from the
Hayagrīva Stotra in that they do not contain the distinctive Āḻvār and
Śrīvaiṣṇava emotionalism.

1. LITERARY GENRES IMITATIVE OF THE VEDIC TRADITION

As mentioned earlier, the relation of the Vedas to the development of
Hinduism has been a much-discussed subject. Renou referred to the
relation as one of paying reverence without making any commitment to the
Vedas.[2] Halbfass, on the other hand, makes the claim that:

> ... regardless of the highly elusive and ambiguous nature of the historical
> relationship between the Veda and Hinduism, the Hindu tradition has, for
> many centuries, defined itself in relation to the Veda. The Veda, or the idea
> of the Veda, has provided one indispensable focus for Hindu self-
> understanding.[3]

The regional development of Hayagrīva in Tamil Nadu makes vivid the

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[2] Louis Renou, *Le Destin du Veda dans l'Inde*, p. 2.
[3] Wilhelm Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection, Exploration in Indian Thought*, p. 7.

importance of the 'status' of the Vedas in that authoritative Vedic literary genres have been employed as a means for celebrating and legitimizing the devotion to Hayagrīva as Supreme. The status accorded to Hayagrīva as the Supreme Lord in the regional sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism is linked back to the Vedic corpus in order to bring sacredness and authoritativeness to this new development.

1.1. Hayagrīva Upaniṣad

The ten or thirteen principal 'classical' Upaniṣads form the last portion of the Veda (Veda+*anta*=Vedānta) belonging to the late Vedic period (ca. 900-500 B.C.E.), and are regarded as divine revelation (*śruti*, that which is heard).[4] Later on, many smaller 'Tantric' and sectarian Upaniṣads, imitative of these principal 'classical' Upaniṣads, were composed; they include a wide variety of deities. These Upaniṣads became popular in the worship of, and meditation upon, the Supreme through the use of key syllables (*bīja-akṣara*) representative of a particular deity.[5]

In the list of 108 Upaniṣads, *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* is the 100th.[6] According to N.S. Subramanian, there are 10 major and 25 minor classical Upaniṣads, as well as other Upaniṣads that he classifies as Śaiva (14), Śākta (8), Vaiṣṇava (14), and Yoga (20).[7] *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* is included as one of the fourteen in the Vaiṣṇava category. The category incorporates Upaniṣads concerned with the various forms of Viṣṇu (for example, *Kṛṣṇa Upaniṣad*).[8] Unlike the classical Upaniṣads, these Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣads are esoteric, with their hymns completely focused on the mantra of the

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[4] The ten classical Upaniṣads are: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Tait-tirīya Upaniṣad, Aitareya Upaniṣad, Kena Upaniṣad, Kaṭha Upaniṣad, Īśa Upaniśad, Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, Praśna Upaniṣad, Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad.* See *Upaniṣat-Saṃgrahaḥ*; N.S. Subramanian, *Encyclopedia of the Upaniṣads* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1985), pp. vii. The additional three of the 'thirteen' classical principal Upaniṣads are: *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, Maitrī Upaniṣad*, and *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad. The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads* (translation by Robert Ernest Hume) (2nd. ed., reprinted; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[5] Dirk Jan Hoens, "Transmission and Fundamental Constituents of the Practice" in *Hindu Tantrism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p. 105.

[6] *Upaniṣat-saṃgrahaḥ* (edited by J.L. Shastri) (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), pp. 619-621. Other editions including the *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* are: *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi*, pp. 12-14 and *Hayagrīva-Paṭalam*, pp. 23-30.

[7] Subramanian, *Encyclopedia of the Upaniṣads*, pp. vii-xi.

[8] See Subramanian, *Encyclopedia of the Upaniṣads*, p. ix.

particular deity with whom they are concerned, and they describe the fruits
derived by acquiring the knowledge of the deity's mantra.

 Hayagrīva Upaniṣad is an example of a brief Tantric Upaniṣad (for a
discussion of Tantrism, see the second part of this chapter below).
Although it is difficult to determine their precise dates, the Tantric
Upaniṣads were most likely written over the period from the 8th century to
the 14th century (and later), during which time Hindu Tantrism flourished.[9]
It would be speculative to determine a precise date for *Hayagrīva
Upaniṣad*, but it appears to be posterior to Vedānta Deśika. For, Vedānta
Deśika cites many classical and minor Upaniṣads as proof texts in *Rahasya
Traya Sāra*, *Pāñcarātra Rakṣā*, and *Śata Dūṣaṇī*, but nowhere does he cite
Hayagrīva Upaniṣad.

 Hayagrīva Upaniṣad illustrates the process of Vedicization, especially
with regards to establishing the horse-headed deity as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu
and connecting him back to the Vedas. It is not only written in an
authoritative literary genre, but it also includes key *mahā-vākyas* (great
statements) to be used as mantras, such as *tat tvam asi* (Thou art that) taken
directly from one of the most authoritative of the classical Upaniṣads, the
Chāndogya Upaniṣad (6.8.7). This imitation of the Upaniṣadic genre and
the inclusion of *mahā-vākyas* from the classical Upaniṣads, in effect,
connect Hayagrīva with the Vedānta, and thus directly associates Him with
śruti.

 Based on the number of vocatives in the texts, we can assume that
Hayagrīva Upaniṣad, addressed to Hayagrīva, is a text meant for recitation.
Focused on the Hayagrīva mantra, it is regarded as containing the wisdom
necessary for *mokṣa*. Hayagrīva is described thus:

> ... Salutations to You,
> whose form is consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*)
> whose essential nature is beyond the Universe. (1.1)

Hayagrīva is clearly regarded as Supreme God in the text. Furthermore, He
is praised both for His great wisdom and for His action of recovering the
Vedas, a myth featured in the *Mahābhārata* and Purāṇas. Continuous with
His association with the Vedas and speech, He is also depicted as having
the form of the Vedas. Finally, Hayagrīva is depicted as having the form of
certain mantras:

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 [9] Teun Goudriaan, "Introduction, History, and Philosophy" in *Hindu Tantrism* (Leiden:
E.J. Brill, 1979), pp. 13-46. André Padoux, "Tantrism", in *Encyclopedia of Religion* Vol. 14,
edited by Mircea Eliade (New York: MacMillan, 1987), p. 275.

Hail!Hail! Salutations to the King of wisdom,
the form of the *Ṛg*, *Yajur* and *Sāma*,
who [performed] the act of recovering the Vedas. (1.1)

Salutations to the great One,
who has the head of a horse
whose body is the *Udgītha* and *Praṇava*.[10] (1.2)

The recitation of the Upaniṣad and the meditation upon the mantras
provided in the text are stated to have the potency of purifying even those
who are adulterous (2.3).

Once the Hayagrīva deity has been invoked and praised, the text
becomes more prescriptive in nature. *Nyāsa*, the Tantric practice of placing
a spiritual letter on each body part in order to spiritually transform each
part of the body, is recommended in *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*. This practice of
nyāsa is believed to purify the body in order to make it a suitable receptacle
for God.[11] The Upaniṣad reads thus:

Aṅga-nyāsaḥ [placement on the limbs of the body] is to be done with the
syllables *a*, *u*, and *m*. (1.4)

Various mantras are distinguished according to the number of seed
syllables (*bīja-akṣara*) in each. For example:

The seven syllable [mantra] is *Oṃ namo bhagavate*. ...
The three syllable [mantra] is *Śrī Viṣṇu*.
The six syllable [mantra] is *mahyam medhām prajñām*. ...
The four syllable [mantra] is *Hayagrīva*. (1.4)

According to the Upaniṣad, the Hayagrīva mantra consists of four syllables.
The Hayagrīva mantra is not written down most likely because it is
regarded as esoteric and thus communicated directly from Ācārya to
disciple. The mantra is claimed to have the same meaning as the four
popular Upaniṣadic passages on Brahman, the underlying nature of Reality.
These four *mahā-vākyas* are actually contained in *Hayagriva Upaniṣad*: (1)
prajñānam ānandam brahman (Brahman is consciousness and bliss); (2)

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[10] *Udgītha* is the chanting of the Sāma Veda. *Praṇava* is the sacred syllable *Oṃ*.
[11] Kane, *History of the Dharmaśāstras*, Vol. 5, Part 2, pp. 1120-1123. Sanjukta Gupta,
"Modes of Worship and Meditation" in *Hindu Tantrism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), pp. 129,
136.

tat tvam asi (Thou art that); (3) *ayam ātma brahman* (the soul is Brahman); and, lastly, (4) *aham brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman).[12]

Hayagriva Upaniṣad further attempts to establish its legitimacy by including four Vedic verses (2.5). Three of the four verses are taken directly from the *Rg Veda* and are concerned with the power of speech. These verses are: (1) *Rg Veda Saṃhitā* 8.100.10; (2) *Rg Veda Saṃhitā* 1.164.41; and (4) *Rg Veda Saṃhitā* 3.53.15. *Rg Veda Saṃhitā* 1.64.41 significantly describes the infallibility of sacred syllables filled with deep meaning.

Hayagrīva Upaniṣad is strongly oriented towards syllables and is predominately constituted of a variety of Vedic and Tantric mantras. Devoid of emotional-devotional expressions, it does clearly state, however, that the recitation of the Hayagrīva mantra is for the purpose of liberation (*mokṣa*) (2.6).

<div align="center">

1.2. Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma Arcanā
(Worship of the One Hundred and Eight Names of Hayagrīva)

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The Worship of the One Hundred and Eight Names of Hayagrīva is another good example of a literary genre (*nāmāvali* or *nāma-stotra*) employed, in part, for the purposes of Vedicization and celebration of the Supremacy of Hayagrīva.[13] It is imitative of the *The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu*, which is contained in the *Mahābhārata* (Anuśāsanika Parvan 149) and to this date continues to be chanted as part of Vaiṣṇava temple ritual. Although the *Mahābhārata* is classified as *smṛti* (that which is remembered), it is frequently referred to as the 'fifth Veda', a concept promulgated by the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Rāmānuja and his disciple Parāśara Bhaṭṭar.[14] Like the chanting of mantras, the recitation of *nāma-stotra* (praise-poem of names) is found in both mainstream Hindu and Tantric traditions. The ancient practice of the recitation of *nāmāvali* was incorporated into the Āgamas as an important and simple mode of devotion. Variant lists of the names of gods or goddesses were developed in the Purāṇic and Āgamic literature (such as the *Lalitā-sahasra-nāma* of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*). Among

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[12] *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* II.4. (1) See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3. 9.28 and *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 3.3. (2) See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7. (3) See *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad* 2 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.9. (4) See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10.

[13] *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi*, pp. 86-88.

[14] See Nayar, *Poetry As Theology*, p. 114.

Vaiṣṇavas and Śrīvaiṣṇavas the names of God may be recited for boons or for pure delight.

Of the one hundred and eight names contained in *The Worship of the One Hundred and Eight Names of Śrī Hayagrīva*, thirty-four are taken from the older and highly revered *Thousand Names of Viṣṇu*. They predominantly reflect the nature of Hayagrīva as Supreme, establishing Him as a 'full' incarnation of Viṣṇu: for example, *Parameśvara,* 'Supreme Ruler' (n. 54); *Pūrṇa*, 'He who is full' (n. 34); and *Paramātma*, the 'Supreme Soul' (n. 39). Various commonly used epithets of Viṣṇu are also included in the *Hayagrīva Nāma-Stotra* like *Hari* (n. 9), *Madhusūdana* (n. 4) and *Govinda* (n. 5).

The remaining seventy-four names, which do not appear in the *Thousand Names of Viṣṇu,* are epithets that depict Hayagrīva in a variety of ways. Some names describe him as Supreme, reflecting His status as the full form of Viṣṇu, such as: *Nirīśa*, 'One who has no lord over Him' (n. 16); *Pāraga*, 'Master' (n. 42); *Para*, 'Highest One' (n. 43); *Mahāviṣṇu*, 'Great Viṣṇu' (n. 2); and *Cidānandamaya*, the 'One who consists of consciousness and bliss' (n. 22). Several of the one-hundred and eight names of Hayagrīva also represent His position as the Supreme through possessing infinite auspicious qualities. He is referred to as *Nirañjana* 'eternally Taintless' (n. 18), *Niṣkalaṅka* 'Taintless One' (n. 19), and *Vimala* 'Pure One' (n. 68), reflecting His wholly pure nature. One name recalls Hayagrīva's act as a benevolent *avatāra* by describing Him as *Vidhistuta*, the 'One who is praised for the act [of recovering the Vedas]' (n. 71). Hayagrīva is also called *Tamohara*, the 'Remover of darkness' (n. 86), and *Ajñānanāśaka*, the 'Destroyer of ignorance' (n. 87), the two names reflecting His role as the Lord of Light and Learning.

Furthermore, many names specifically reflect Hayagrīva's unique association with (1) wisdom/Vedas, and (2) speech/mantra. In the case of wisdom/Vedas, Hayagrīva is named as *Jñānada*, the 'Bestower of wisdom' (n. 90); *Jñāni*, the 'Wise One' (n. 88); *Vedavedya*, the 'One who is celebrated for [recovering] the Vedas/Knower of the Vedas' (n. 32); and *Śrutimaya*, the 'One who is composed of *śruti* (Vedas)' (n. 76). Likewise, there are names which reflect Hayagrīva's association with speech/mantra, such as *Vākpati*, the 'Lord of speech' (n. 91); *Jāpakapryakṛta*, the 'Benefactor of those who recite *japa* (muttered prayer)' (n. 66); *Japapriya*, the 'One who is fond of *japa*' (n. 64); and *Japastuti*, the 'One who is praised by *japa*' (n. 65).

Interestingly, there is also an interplay of Hayagrīva with the goose, a pan-Indian symbol of wisdom and learning. In order to emphasize the

greatness of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Learning, Hayagrīva is called *Haṃsa*, 'Goose' (n. 99) and *Paramahaṃsa*, the 'Supreme Goose' (n. 100).[15] As seen in the previous chapter, the rituals for Hayagrīva at the temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram replace the rituals for Sarasvatī, the pan-Indian goddess of learning, who is symbolized by the goose.[16]

Finally, there are names which are iconographical in content. For instance, Hayagrīva's name *Suddhasphaṭikasaṃkāśa*, 'One whose [lustre] is similar to pure crystal' (n. 104), repeats an image found in several Āgamic texts. Hayagrīva is, likewise, called *Akṣamālājñānamudrāyukta-hasta*, the 'One who has a hand in the position of wisdom and a hand holding the rosary' (n. 49). Once again, this description of the icon of Hayagrīva is contained in several of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.

On theological grounds, *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma Arcanā* is clearly a Śrīvaiṣṇava text in that its celebration of Hayagrīva is based on two fundamental attributes: (1) supremacy and (2) purity. According to the theology of God established by the most eminent Śrīvaiṣṇava teacher (Rāmānuja), the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu is *wholly* benevolent and *wholly* taintless (*amalatva*).[17] The rationale for the inclusion of *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma Arcanā* here among the other texts is that it manifestly mimics the established pan-Indian Thousand Names of Viṣṇu, contained in the epic *Mahābhārata*, in an apparent endeavour to claim a wider legitimacy.

Unlike *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* and *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma Arcanā*, which reflect the employment of an authoritative 'mainstream' literary genre, the other three Āgamic ritual texts reflect the usage of pan-Indian Tantric literary genres.

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[15] Following Vogel, I translate *haṃsa* as goose. In his analysis of *haṃsa*, Vogel raises a pertinent question regarding translation; that is, do scholars have the right to translate a word that provides a connotation suitable for their own culture? Western scholars (followed by Indian scholars) have translated *haṃsa* as swan or flamingo, when it should be rendered 'goose'. The swan is a rare bird in India. And, unlike in the West (where the goose is regarded as an ugly domesticated bird), the goose in India is a strong and noble bird that migrates to the spiritual Himalayan mountains. Jean Phillipe Vogel, *The Goose in Indian Literature and Art* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962), pp. 1-8.

[16] The goose (*haṃsa*) is associated with the goddess Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning. Vogel, *The Goose in Indian Literature and Art*, p. 16.

[17] *Śrī Bhāṣya* 3.2.5.20. See Nayar, "The Tamilizing of a Sacred Sanskrit Text", pp. 193-198.

2. LITERARY GENRES IMITATIVE OF THE TANTRIC TRADITION

Several of the short ritual texts are, in part, imitative of literary genres in the pan-Indian Tantric tradition, consequently a discussion of Tantra follows below before an examination of these texts.

2.1. *Indian Tantra*

The word *tantra* literally means 'thread or loom'.[18] It refers to a lineage of gurus through whom the disciple is given the secret teachings of a particular sect. Tantric literature is comprised of a huge number of texts. According to André Padoux, there are four general statements that can be made with some certainty about the historical development of Tantrism: (1) although there are Tantric elements in the Vedas, the Tantric tradition is a later development, (2) Tantra took shape around the 1st century C.E., (3) Hindu Tantra preceded Buddhist Tantra, and lastly (4) Tantra was well established by the 6th-7th century C.E. and flourished during the period from the 8th century to the 14th century.[19] Recent research by Sanderson has shown that the Śaiva Tantric texts are, indeed, earlier and were the models for the later composition of both the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra Āgamas and Buddhist Tantric texts.[20]

The Tantric religious path is a practical one that entails specific rituals and meditative techniques in order to attain spiritual realization. There are various modes of worship in Tantra, including: (1) chanting the mantra (meditative syllable), (2) meditation using the *yantra* (meditative diagram), (3) *pūjā* (worship offering), (4) *homa* (sacrificial offering), (5) recitation of the *kavaca* ([protective] shield), (6) chanting of the *hṛdya* (essence), (7) recitation of *nāma-stotra* (praise-poem of names), and (8) chanting of the *pañjara* ([protective]-cage). The Tantric practice of recitation of sacred syllables and texts is central to the religious path for the purpose of (1) self-

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[18] The word *tantra* is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *tan* 'to shine, extend, spread, spin out, manifest'. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, pp. 435-436.

[19] Teun Goudriaan,, "Introduction, History, and Philosophy", pp. 5-9; 13-46. Padoux, "Tantrism", p. 275.

[20] Alexis Sanderson, "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pāñ-carātras, and the Buddhist Yoginītantras", in *Les Sources et Le Temps*, edited by F. Grimal (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2001), pp. 1-47.

purification, (2) self-consecration, and finally (3) visualization of the deity.[21]

Traditionally, only a few individuals were formally initiated into a particular Tantric sect in order to receive the secret teachings. Nevertheless, Tantra is central to the study of the development of Indian traditions because it has had a major influence on non-Tantric traditions within Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.[22] There are many Tantric elements to be found in traditions that regard themselves as Vedic. This mutual borrowing makes it difficult at times to clearly distinguish between what has its origins in Tantra and what does not.

Similarities exist between Vedic and Tantric meditative and ritual practices; the most important of these is the equation of *śabda* (speech/word/sound) with divine cosmic energy. The concept of *śabda* is both the means to, and the goal of, spiritual attainment. Mantra means 'sacred sound, sacrificial formula, or prayer', derived from the Sanskrit verb root *man* 'to think, believe, imagine, conjecture'. One of the most popular and least complex forms of worship—the chanting of mantras—is related to this notion of speech.[23] Although both the Vedic and Tantric traditions use mantras, there is some divergence in their respective understanding of them. The various conceptions of mantra have been studied by scholars, and these form the subject of the next section.

2.1.1 *The Hindu Understanding of Mantra*

Many studies have been published comparing the understanding of mantra in the various streams of Hindu thought. However, scholars disagree radically among themselves as to the nature and function of mantra in the various traditions. In his article "Vedic Mantras", Fritz Staal concludes that

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[21] Hoens, "Transmission and Fundamental Constituents of the Practice", pp. 90-117. Although the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric practices are quite similar, their goals differ. In Hindu Tantra, the goal is the merging of one's *ātman* with *brahman* (or the attainment of union with one's particular deity), while in Buddhist Tantra the goal is to quickly achieve buddhahood. Elizabeth Anne Benard, *Chinnamastā: The Aweful Buddhist and Hindu Tantric Goddess* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), pp. 23-46, 77-78.

[22] For a good discussion of the relationship between Vedic and Tantric worship, see Alexis Sanderson, "Śaivism in the Tantric Tradition", in *The World's Religion* edited by Steward Sutherland et al. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988), pp. 660-704.

[23] For an exploration of the concept *vac*, see André Padoux, *Vac, The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*, translated by Jacques Gontier (Albany: State of New York University Press, 1990).

the 'alleged differences' between the Vedic and the Tantric mantras do not exist because mantras are for ritual. According to his theory of mantra, although some mantras are closer to ordinary language and others are devoid of translatory meaning, functionally they are identical. Staal claims that even though Purāṇic mantras can be understood literally (unlike the Tantric *bīja-mantras*), they are actually named according to their number of syllables; that is, both Vedic *stobhas* and Tantric *bīja-mantras* are constructed in accordance with the phonological rules of Sanskrit as they are ultimately for the purpose of memorization.[24]

Contrary to Staal's claim, in his article "The Mantra in Vedic and Tantric Ritual" Wade Wheelock recognizes both similarities and differences between Vedic and Tantric conceptions of mantra. The basic underlying difference between the Vedic and Tantric understanding of mantra is that, whereas the Vedic mantras are regarded as eternal, the Tantric mantras are regarded as having been created within time.[25]

In the article "The Pāñcarātra Attitude to Mantra", Sanjukta Gupta distinguishes the nature and functions of the mantra in the Vedic, Tantric and Pāñcarātric traditions. The purpose of the utterance of mantras while performing the worship (*pūjā*) rituals is single-minded concentration on the mantras and the divinities of which they are the primary form. For Pāñcarātrins, mantra—the sonic manifestation of God—is the link between the devotee and his or her God. The power a Pāñcarātrin derives from his or her mantra is understood to be solely the fruit of God's grace. According to Pāñcarātra Āgamic thought, mantras, God's forms assumed out of grace, are the very embodiments of that grace.[26]

In her study of Rāmānuja's two immediate disciples Kūreśa and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, Nancy Ann Nayar looks at the relation between mantra and *stotra* (praise-poem) within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. She demonstrates how the three streams of the tradition (the Sanskrit Vedas, the Tamil Veda, and the Pāñcarātra Āgamas) were synthesized by developing a multidimensional view of mantra, linking mantra closely with *stotra*. According to Nayar, the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas appear to have expanded the Pāñcarātric practice of regarding *stotras* as mantras in order to endow the praise-poems with prestige and potency. The significance given to the liturgical recitation of *stotras* within the Śrīvaiṣṇava *pūjā* (worship)

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[24] *Stobha* is a chanted interjection, contained particularly in the *Sāma Veda*. Staal, "Vedic Mantras", p. 63.

[25] Wade T. Wheelock, "The Mantra in Vedic and Tantric Ritual", in *Mantra*, pp. 98-122.

[26] Gupta, "The Pāñcarātra Attitude to Mantra", pp. 224-48.

ceremony is directly linked to the community's devotional orientation. The
use of mantra is central to ritual described in the early 'classical' Pāñcarātra
Āgamas, whereas the later Āgamas place an increasing emphasis on the
recitation of *stotras*. Indeed, Bhaṭṭar distinguishes mantra from *stotra*
solely on the basis of the reciter's intentions: it is called a mantra if it is
recited for the attainment of specific fruits, whereas it is called a *stotra* if
it is recited for pure delight.[27]

Even as there are differences between the Vedic and Tantric concept and
usage of mantras, there is ambiguity about the relation between mainstream
Hindu traditions and Tantric traditions. Due to the negative attitude and
lack of respect attached to some Tantric practices (such as eating meat and
religio-sexual practices), Pāñcarātrins have tended to disassociate
Pāñcarātra from Tantra. On the other hand, the word Tantra is sometimes
used interchangeably with Āgama, and the Pāñcarātra Āgamic tradition de-
finitely contains ritual practices influenced by Tantra.[28] According to
Gonda, the medieval ritual manuals of both the Vaikhānasa and the
Pāñcarātra Āgamic traditions contain popular Tantric elements, for
instance, the use of *yantras* and *bīja-mantras*. After the medieval period,
even more Tantric elements were incorporated into their ritual manuals,
including the practice of *nyāsa*.[29]

As aforementioned, the agglomeration of Vedic and Tantric elements in
Hinduism makes it difficult at times to clearly discern what is Tantric and
what is not. The Pāñcarātra Āgamas nonetheless appear to have grown out
of Tantric antecedents. Some sectarian traditions—including Śrī-
vaiṣṇavism—have incorporated into their medieval ritual manuals Tantric
elements, including *bīja-mantras*, *yantras*, and the practice of *nyāsa*.[30] The
three remaining ritual texts concerned with Hayagrīva, which are discussed
in this section, are written in Tantric literary genres that are common to the
Āgamic tradition: *Hayagrīva Kavaca* (*Hayagrīva-Protective Shield*),
Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat (*Another Hayagrīva-Protective Shield*), and
Hayagrīva Pañjara (*Hayagrīva [Protective]-Cage*). *Kavaca* and *pañjara*
are two literary genres common to the Tantric tradition, based on the

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[27] Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, pp. 22-24.
[28] Pandit M. Duraiswamy Aiyangar and Pandit T. Venugopalacharya, *Śrī Pāñcarātra-rakṣā of Vedānta Deśika* (Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1967), pp. vii-xii.
[29] Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 143. *Bīja-mantras* (seed-*mantra*) is the *mantra* used in the worship of a particular deity, and is regarded as a component part of the *yantraic* form of the deity. See *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* and *Hayagrīva Kavaca Prārambha* for the description and incorporation of the practice of *nyāsa*.
[30] Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, p. 143.

understanding that spiritual power (*śakti*) is associated with words (*śabda*). *Kavacas* and *pañjaras* are specifically recited both for protection and the attainment of boons. The power generated by their recitation is believed to neutralize evil power and influences.

These three ritual texts on Hayagrīva are generic in nature; that is, Hayagrīva could be replaced by the name of another god simply by inserting a *stotra* stanza specific to a different deity. Although the generic parts of the compositions may be earlier in origin, they are accompanied by a beginning and an ending specific to Hayagrīva which seem to be more recent. The generic nature of these Āgamic compositions make them difficult to date. However, unlike the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, these compositions are consistent in their portrayal of Hayagrīva as the full form of Viṣṇu. This consistency, unlike in the Āgamas, may be an indication that these ritual texts are connected with the establishment of Hayagrīva's supremacy at the local level in Tiruvahīndrapuram, Tamil Nadu. Although it may seem speculative, I am inclined to believe that these texts are posterior to Vedānta Deśika and the establishment of the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple built in 1667 C.E. (the most important temple wherein Hayagrīva is the presiding deity).

2.2. Hayagriva Kavaca (Hayagrīva-[Protective] Shield)

The *kavaca* reflects the Tantric tradition of the recitation of mantras. The word *kavaca*—meaning 'armour, jacket, amulet, charm, mystical syllable forming part of a mantra used as an amulet'—is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *ku* 'to cry out, moan, make a sound or any noise'.[31] *Kavacas* are chants recited for the purpose of protection. The very words of the *kavaca* are themselves regarded as having a protective function similar to that of a shield.

Hayagrīva Kavaca begins by describing Hayagrīva as the Seer and Supreme Soul: "The *ṛṣi* of this great mantra, the *Hayagrīva Kavaca*—is Hayagrīva. It is [composed in] the eight syllabled metre. Śrī Hayagrīva, the Supreme Soul, is its deity (*devatā*)." This introduction is followed by three mantras along with salutations directed to Hayagrīva: the *bīja-mantra*, the *śakti-mantra*, and the *kīlaka-mantra* are connected with salutations to the Lord of Speech, the Foundation of Learning, and the Ocean of Vedas, respectively.

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[31] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, pp. 264, 299.

The stanzas on the three mantras are followed by three stanzas that consist of both devotional-poetical and iconographical descriptions of Hayagrīva, continuous with passages in some Pāñcarātra Āgamas:

> [I meditate on Hayagrīva]
> whose hands are glittering
>   with the discus (*cakra*), conch shell (*śaṅkha*), rosary (*akṣa-valaya*)
>   and the hand position of knowledge (*jñāna-mudrā*)
> whose multitude of splendorous lightbeams
>   decorates the sky ... .(v. 2)

The fifteen stanzas that follow are descriptions of God along with requests for protection. Two major verbal imperatives are employed, e.g., *pātu* (protect me) or *rakṣatu* (save me).[32] The *kavaca* includes a stanza requesting the protection of each part of the body. These stanzas commence with a request for the protection of the head and facial features, thus:

> *Oṃ*, may Hayagrīva protect my head.
> [May] the One who abides in the moon,
>   protect my forehead.
> May the One who is the wisdom of the Śāstras
>   protect my two eyes.
> [May] Brahman's nature,
>   which is the Word (*śabda*),
>   [protect my] two ears. (v. 4)

Following the request for the protection of the head and facial features, the text proceeds through the other parts of the body down to the feet and toes. Although the recitation of the *kavaca* and the practice of *nyāsa* (placing a spiritual letter on each body part) are Āgamic rituals focusing on specific parts of the body, the two differ in their aims. The recitation of the *kavaca* is for the neutralization of evil whereas the purpose of *nyāsa* is the spiritual transformation of each body part so that the body may become pure and suitable as a receptacle for God.

After going through the various parts of the body, the *kavaca* requests the protection of mental faculties like the senses and the heart:

> May the Soul of the all-enveloping sky
>   protect my essence.

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[32] *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi*, pp. 103-104; *Hayagrīva-Paṭalam*, pp. 17-22. *Pātu* is the second person singular imperative form of the Sanskrit verbal root *pā* 'to protect from, defend against, preserve'. *Rakṣatu* is the second person singular imperative form of the Sanskrit verbal root *rakṣ* 'to save, protect, take care'.

> [May] the Soul that is [vast as] heaven
>   [protect] the interior cavity of my heart. (v. 14)

The *kavaca* then requests protection for the different regions of the world (v. 18). Additionally, several stanzas contain depictions of the nature of Hayagrīva (see v. 4, cited above), whereas some make reference to other forms of Viṣṇu:

> May the omnipresent One
>   who resides in the cavity (*kukṣi*) [of the heart]
>   [protect my] belly (*kukṣi*).
> [May] the Destroyer of Bali
>   [who took three strides to measure the earth
>   protect] the three folds of skin [on my belly] ... .[33] (v. 6)

Finally, the *kavaca* ends with a *phala-śruti* that promises knowledge, wealth and a good life as a result of the recitation of the *kavaca*.

2.3 Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat (Another Hayagrīva [Protective]-Shield)

As its name suggests, *Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat* is also a text meant to be recited for protection. It begins in a narrative form, with Pārvatī asking Śiva to tell her the story of Hayagrīva. This narrative framework is similar to that found in the Purāṇas and the introductory portions of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra Āgamas.[34]

Śiva explains that Viṣṇu will take a form on earth as his play (*līlā*) at the end of the *kali* age. The narrative passage is followed by two mantras—*hnaum bījam* and *Oṃ kīlakam* (v. 6)—and an opening stanza resembling a *stotra* stanza, describing Hayagrīva thus:

> I praise the One with a horse's mouth (*haya-tuṇḍa*),
> who bears in His hands a book (*pustaka*), a lotus (*ambuja*),
>   [and] rosary beads (*akṣa-mālā*),

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[33] Vāmana (the dwarf *avatāra* of Viṣṇu) recovers the three worlds (heaven, sky and earth) from the demon Bali, by taking three strides. Vāmana is often referred to in the hymns of the Ālvārs. See, e.g., *Tiruvāymoḻi* 2.4.11, 2.7.7-8; *Nacciyār Tirumoḻi* 4.2, 11.4; and *Periya Tirumoḻi* 6.1.10, 8.3.10. See also *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (III.1.42-43) and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (VIII.18).

[34] *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi*, pp. 105-106. It may seem surprising that Śiva and Parvatī are included in what is clearly a Vaiṣṇava *kavaca*. However, it may well be a form of establishing Hayagrīva's supremacy since the narrative frameworks are often of 'lesser' gods telling the story of the Supreme.

and has one hand in the position of exposition (*vyākhya-mudrā*),
whose head is anointed
by nectar overflowing
  from a golden jar
[held] in the lotus-like hands of Lakṣmī. (v. 7)

The stanzas that follow describe the nature or attributes of God, each
concluding with specific petitions for protection: *pātu* (protect me) or
rakṣatu (save me). As in *Hayagrīva Kavaca*, the text goes through all the
parts of the body with a stanza requesting the protection of each part,
beginning with the head and moving down through all the body parts to the
feet.

   Several stanzas requesting protection refer to Viṣṇu and his *avatāric*
forms. Interestingly, there is a frequent play on words in the *kavacas*, for
the epithets for Viṣṇu often contain the names of parts of the body. There
is a reference to Viṣṇu as the incarnation of Rāma who is served by
Hanumān (as described in the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*):

> [May] the One who is served by Hanumān
> (the powerful-jawed one)
>   [protect my] jaw (*hanu*). (v. 10)

There are also stanzas that refer to attributes specifically associated with
Hayagrīva:

> May the Lord of Speech,
>   protect my face.
> May the slayer of the enemy of gods
>   protect my tongue. (v. 9)
>
> May the Horse-necked One (*haya-grīva*)
>   protect my neck (*grīva*). (v. 10)

After going through each part of the body, the *kavaca* makes requests for
the protection of the four regions of the world:

> May the Lord of speech
>   protect the eastern quarter.
> [May] the unconquerable One
>   [protect] the southern quarter.
> May the Supporter of the universe
>   protect the western quarter.
> [May] the One who is celebrated by Śiva,
>   [protect] the northern quarter. (v. 13)

The *kavaca*'s final two stanzas (vs. 15-16) prescribe the appropriate times for the recitation of the *kavaca* and describe the fruits to be obtained. Most significantly, v. 16 states that one is purified by this devotional practice and attains *mokṣa*:

> A learned one,
> even though doubting, disputing, and perplexed,
> should recite this *kavaca*
> during the three divisions of the day
> [dawn, noon, sunset].
>
> Purified by [the practice of] devotion (*bhakti*),
> [such a one] is not born again. (v. 16)

Hayagrīva Kavaca and *Hayagrīva Kavaca Anyat* are midway between mantra and *stotra* (praise-poem). The stanzas of both *kavacas* describe the icon and qualities of Hayagrīva, with requests in stanza form addressed directly to God, as in the *stotra*. The significant difference between these *kavacas* and Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional poetry (such as the *Hayagrīva Stotra*) is that the requests in the former are directed to God specifically for protection (with the understanding that by the recitation of the *kavaca* one may also attain *mokṣa*); on the other hand, the *stotras* are recited as aids to attaining the blissful enjoyment of God's presence, the simple reception of His grace, or his visual appearance (*darśana*) to the devotee.

2.4. Hayagriva Pañjara (Hayagrīva [Protective]-Cage)

Typical of the Tantric tradition, the *pañjara* is recited in order to gain the power of a particular deity. The word *pañjara*, meaning 'cage, body, particular prayers and formularies', is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *paj* (to become stiff or rigid).[35] According to both Vedic and Tantric beliefs, one attains spiritual power upon the performance of these religious recitations (especially mantras).[36]

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[35] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 575.

[36] There is a reference to Hayagrīva in the context of the recitation of a *pañjara* in the Purāṇic corpus. In *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.13.1-10 ('Viṣṇupañjarastotra'), an encyclopedic Purāṇa, Hari requests Viṣṇu for protection. Hayagrīva is mentioned among the many epithets and *avatāras* of Viṣṇu: "taking up Vaijayantī and the necklace (*śrīvatsā*) protect me in the northeast. O Lord *Hayagrīva*, obeisance to Thee". However, although the passage in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* is solely a request for protection, *Hayagrīva Pañjara* is a petition for the removal of evil and attainment of fruits.

Hayagriva Pañjara[37] is a short ritual text of salutations and requests made to God. It begins with an affirmation that one becomes powerful through the recitation of the hymn:

> Now, I become more powerful
> [with] the proper *pañjara* of Hayagrīva,
> wherein the word
>   containing the totality of wisdom
> is like the flowing Ganges river. (v. 1)

God Hayagrīva is described iconographically; for example, He "who has long lotus-like eyes, noble limbs and four arms" (v. 3). Salutations are made to Hayagrīva similar to those found in *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*:

> Obeisance to the God of gods,
> whose body is the sacred syllable *Om* and *Udgītha*,
> who is the image of the *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, and *Sāma* [Vedas],
> and who is the Granter of the desired goal. (v. 6)

Each stanza has at least one vocative and, again, most are directed to God through repetitive use of the second singular imperative verbal form. The basic request made to God is for the destruction of evil. There are, as well as, petitions for good worldly fortune and knowledge:

> Obeisance to God,
> who has the head of a horse (*haya-śīrṣa*)
> and is the Destroyer of enemies.
>
> Destroy all poverty
> [and] bring about good fortune. (v. 9)

and

> Obeisance to the One
> who has the head of a horse (*haya-śīrṣa*),
> the Lord who is God of gods.
>
> May [He] grant me intelligence, wisdom,
> strength, knowledge,
> wealth, sons and grandsons. (v. 10)

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[37] *Śrīlakṣmī Hayagrīva Sahasranāmastotrādi*, p. 16. This ritual hymn is in fact quite similar to *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti*, and is discussed in the section 'Śrīvaiṣṇava Devotional Hymns in Praise of Hayagrīva' of Chapter Seven.

The final portion of the *pañjara* consists of stanzas praising Hayagrīva for His qualities and acts, in particular, the removal of ignorance and the bestowal of wisdom. Furthermore, stanza 18 refers to the "One who is to be worshipped with these twelve mantras" (here the term mantra appears to refer to the stanzas of the *pañjara*), even though there are actually 18 stanzas in the hymn. The final stanza claims that the Lord is the Remover of all the difficulties of the world, which may be a reference to Hayagrīva as the granter of *mokṣa*, the release from *saṃsāra*.

The *pañjara* (unlike the *kavaca*) does not make requests for the protection of each part of the body. However, similar to the two *kavacas*, *Hayagrīva Pañjara* appears to fulfill a function somewhat between the Tantric Upaniṣads and Bhakti *stotras*. The *pañjara* parallels the *Hayagrīva Stotra* in several ways: it contains vivid visual depictions of Hayagrīva like those of the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, and its intended audience is God Himself. Furthermore, it includes requests for God's boons and protection. However, the *pañjara* differs from the typical Śrīvaiṣṇava *stotra* in that many of its requests are not for the enjoyment of the visual experience (*darśana*) of God; rather, they are for the attainment of worldly boons and spiritual power.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE CELEBRATION OF HAYAGRĪVA IN THE FIVE SHORT PAN-INDIAN RITUAL TEXTS

The five short ritual texts have an importance beyond the apparent effort to acquire broader legitimacy implicit in the imitation of pan-Indian literary genres. They also reinforce the unique development of the elevation in one region of an otherwise minor deity in the Hindu pantheon to the Supreme and underline His particular attributes.

3.1. *Hayagrīva as Supreme*

Unlike the Āgamas and like the *Hayagrīva Stotra* , the short ritual texts on Hayagrīva which follow that tradition are in agreement with each other in their depiction of Hayagrīva as the Supreme. *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* describes Hayagrīva as Supreme in its portrayal of Him as having the form of consciousness and bliss. This is continuous with the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman in the stanza quoted in *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* itself—*prajñānam ānandam brahman* (Brahman is consciousness and bliss) (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*

Upaniṣad 3. 9.28; *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 3.3). It connects Hayagrīva with all the *mahā-vākyas* of the classical Upaniṣads.

The Worship of the One Hundred and Eight Names of Hayagrīva is also written in an authoritative literary genre (*nāmāvali*) that derives its legitimacy from the *Mahābhārata's Thousand Names of Viṣṇu*, which this text imitates. By way of content and genre, the text appears to be employed for the purpose of celebration of Hayagrīva's status as Supreme God who is wholly taintless (*amalatva*). Even though this hymn demonstrates the employment of a pan-Indian literary genre, it does so explicitly within the context of Rāmānuja's Śrīvaiṣṇava theology of God. Indeed, even the *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma Arcanā* does not contain any names reflecting the taintless nature of Viṣṇu,[38] while *Mahābhārata's Thousand Names of Viṣṇu* contains such names.

The *kavacas* and the *pañjara*, literary genres typical of the pan-Indian Tantric tradition, consistently acknowledge Hayagrīva as Supreme, and recognize Him as a 'full form' of Viṣṇu. In this, they differ from the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, which contain highly contradictory references to Hayagrīva's status. Not only do the short texts refer to Hayagrīva as the Supreme God, Supreme Soul, Ruler of the three worlds, Supreme Ruler and the like, they also include the many epithets (such as Madhusūdana and Keśava) and *avatāras* (Vāmana, Rāma, and Hari) of Viṣṇu, reflecting the understanding that Hayagrīva and Viṣṇu are one and the same. This equation of Hayagrīva with Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu's various forms serves to further establish Hayagrīva as a 'full-form' of Lord Viṣṇu.

Although these five ritual texts depict Hayagrīva as the full *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, there is no mention nor any concern expressed as to why or how this particular incarnation of Viṣṇu came to have a horse-head (an issue important only in the *Devībhāgavata* and *Skanda Purāṇas*). Nor do the texts dwell on Hayagrīva's mythic *avatāric* act of recovering the Vedas from the demons, although that act may be implicit in the great importance placed upon His association with wisdom and the Vedas.

3.2. *Hayagrīva as Protector of the Vedas and His Devotees*

Both an implicit and an explicit connection between Hayagrīva and the Vedas is expressed in these ritual texts. There are, in fact, very few direct references to the Epic and Purāṇic myth of Hayagrīva's *avatāric* act of

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[38] Nayar, *Poetry As Theology*, p. 83.

recovering the Vedas and killing the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. However, the myth does provide the scope for the texts' description of Hayagrīva as the Source of the Vedas and as Protector of His devotees. Firstly, *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* directly connects Him with the Vedas merely by the literary genre of the text and the inclusion of the most important Upaniṣadic *mahā-vākyas*. Secondly, although there are only a few references to the myth of Hayagrīva's benevolent act of recovering the Vedas, He is otherwise connected to the Vedas by being described as in "the form of the *Ṛg*, *Yajur* and *Sāma* [Vedas]" or "the form of the Vedas". Hayagrīva is not just the recoverer of the Vedas but their very source! References to the horse-headed deity as being the source or form of the Vedas, which are present in all of these ritual texts, also implicitly establish Him as Supreme.

Interestingly, both *kavacas* refer to Hayagrīva's destruction of the demons (although neither mentions His mythic act of saving the Vedas). Indeed, His destruction of evil forces is paramount in both texts, and this must surely be an extension of His mythic *avatāric* role as destroyer of the demons. Here, as in the Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, the ancient myth has become less salient as a story and more significant as the revelation of God's qualities. In fact, Hayagrīva's protective role towards His devotees now has superceded His rescue of the Vedas in olden times. Hayagrīva is not only praised for His own wisdom but for His gift of that wisdom to His devotees as well. In the *kavacas*, through an extension of His benevolent act of killing the demons, Hayagrīva is established not only as the Protector of the Vedas, but also as the Protector of His devotees.

3.3. *The Short Ritual Texts in the Light of Vedānta Deśika's Hayagrīva Stotra*

The five short ritual texts on Hayagrīva demonstrate the linking of the regional sectarian tradition of Śrīvaiṣṇavism to both the pan-Indian Vedic and pan-Indian sectarian traditions. While these short ritual texts are largely Pāñcarātric in orientation, unlike the actual Pāñcarātra Āgamas themselves they consistently and clearly depict Hayagrīva as Supreme or the 'full' form of Viṣṇu in stanzas descriptive of His iconic incarnation (*arcā-avatāra*). These late Āgamic texts place a great emphasis on the concept of mantra and on the power that one attains through the recitation of these texts. In *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*, Hayagrīva is described as being in the form of *praṇava* (sacred syllable *Oṃ*) and as a *bīja-mantra*; the other

short ritual texts describe Hayagrīva in a slightly more personalized fashion. The way in which the deity is depicted is somewhat dependent on the genre imitated; that is, Hayagriva is appropriately depicted in an abstract manner in the syllable-oriented *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*, whereas He becomes somewhat more personalized in the two *kavacas* and *pañjara*, although less so than in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*. By the very fact that both the *kavacas* and the *stotra* are addressed to God Himself, they encourage a more personal relationship between the devotee and Hayagrīva.

Although there are similarities between the ritual texts and Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*, it is important not to overlook the rather significant differences between the two. Both these late Āgamic compositions and the *stotra* are consistent in their portrayal of Hayagrīva as Supreme. However, they differ in their articulation of the devotee's experience of God, as they do in the kinds of requests they make to God. Although the reciter of the short ritual texts seeks boons, power, and protection (depending on the literary genre), the *Hayagrīva Stotra* reflects the more personal relationship that Śrīvaiṣṇava devotees, following Āḷvār emotionalism, have with God. Deśika, for example, seeks the blissful enjoyment of Hayagrīva's presence in his mind or heart, rather than His mere protection. Although Pāñcarātra is a temple tradition with emphasis on icons, often worshipped with mantra recitations, for Śrīvaiṣṇavas Hayagrīva has evolved, on the basis of Vedānta Deśika's *stotra*, into a God with whom the devotee has an emotional and personal relationship. Indeed, it is through the *stotra* that Hayagrīva became personalized and, as a result, popular.

4. CONCLUSION

The five short Āgamic ritual texts, which employ pan-Indian literary genres and contain Āgamic/Śrīvaiṣṇava theology, reflect the interaction between the regional and pan-Indian traditions. These texts appear to have been composed in the Pāñcarātrin temple milieu of Tamil Nadu after Vedānta Deśika and are, indeed, frequently used by Śrīvaiṣṇavas. In ingeniously emulating pan-Indian literary genres, the texts evidence the quest for pan-Indian legitimacy for local sectarian themes.

Hayagrīva is related back to the Vedic corpus and the *Mahābhārata* by the employment of well-established literary genres such as the Upaniṣad, (both in general and by citation from the classical and authoritative

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.9.28, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7), and *The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu*. Indeed, this appears to be a means to establish the strongly local sectarian worship of Hayagrīva as authoritative.

Although none of the five ritual texts places much importance upon Hayagriva's mythic act of saving the Vedas from the demons, they, like Deśika, clearly and definitely establish *Hayagrīva as the Protector*, not only of the Vedas, but also of His devotees. However, unlike these texts, the *Hayagrīva Stotra* reflects the more personal and emotional relationship that devotees have with God in Śrīvaiṣṇavism wherein devotees seek the blissful enjoyment of Hayagrīva's presence in the mind or heart, rather than the mere boon of His protection. Nonetheless, these five ritual texts seek to locate the worship of Hayagrīva as Supreme in pan-Indian mainstream Hinduism by virtue of literary genres they employ.

PART FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

MYTH IN THE SERVICE OF THEOLOGY:
SELECTIVITY AMID COMPLEXITY
IN THE ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVA IMAGE AND WORSHIP OF HAYAGRĪVA

This in-depth study of Hayagrīva—a pan-Indian deity who is especially revered in Tamil Nadu—illuminates the multi-faceted development of a deity as it occurs among the plurality of India's religious streams. The diversity and complexity of the historical process that traditions in India have undergone necessarily requires a multidimensional approach in the tracing of the development of the depictions of Hayagrīva. Such an approach consists of, in the first instance, an analysis that is both *diachronic*—examining the religious development and transformation of the deity through time (historically)—and *synchronic*, that is, viewing the depictions of the deity in one religious stream in relation to the versions in other streams during a given time period.

  This study has looked at the various depictions of Hayagrīva in terms of the mythic, iconographical, and ritual transformation of that deity during the course of the development of the various religious traditions at the pan-Indian level. Because the living tradition of Hayagrīva worship is located in Tamil Nadu, the study has necessarily also included an analysis of His status and role at the regional level. In examining, both *diachronically* and *synchronically*, the various religious streams that contributed to the regional development of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning in Tamil Nadu, two conceptual tools emerged as highly useful in comprehending the development of the deity. Firstly, viewing the development of the deity at the pan-Indian level through the *kaleidoscopic perspective* helps us grasp more fully the many variant depictions of the horse-headed figure, and prevents us from thinking too unilinearly in terms of its development. This perspective clearly shows that Hayagrīva does not have a single history, but many 'histories'. Secondly, looking back in time through the *reverse-prismatic perspective* at the development of the deity at the regional level enables us to apprehend better the particular regional understanding of a pan-Indian deity who—through a process of high selectivity regarding the depictions in the pan-Indian texts—has acquired a position of special reverence within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition of Tamil Nadu (since the 14th century C.E.). These two perspectives on the

development of the horse-headed deity Hayagrīva enable us to shed considerable new light on the relation and interaction between the regional and the pan-Indian levels, between Śrīvaiṣṇavism and greater Hinduism.

1. The Kaleidoscopic Perspective:
The Complexity in Motifs, Patterns, and Status of Hayagrīva as a Pan-Indian Deity

The kaleidoscopic perspective reveals how, by analogy, through the variant combination of a relatively small number of elements, a large number of patterns are produced. Some scholars have used the analogy of the kaleidoscope in the study of Hinduism as a whole or some aspects of it. The present study extends the application of the kaleidoscopic analogy to the development of the images of a specific deity on the understanding that, although many of their constituent elements remain the same (with some, no doubt, dropped), they appear in a wide variety of patterns. This intensive investigation of the development of the Hayagrīva figure demonstrates the usefulness of the *kaleidoscopic perspective* as well in the case of the various depictions of Hayagrīva in the multitude of Hindu texts. Indeed, sometimes the horse-headed figure is an incarnation of God who kills the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, and at other times it is a demon who is killed by Viṣṇu. The kaleidoscopic perspective helps us understand the many variant depictions of the horse-headed figure appearing in the profusion of Hindu texts, at times even within a single text. These texts have been differentiated as: (1) pan-Indian 'mainstream'; (2) pan-Indian sectarian; and (3) regional sectarian.

1.1. *Vedic Antecedents*

The Vedas contain stories about the beheading sacrifice of Yajña and Viṣṇu (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14.1.1-17; *Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa* 7.5.6), which some regard as an antecedent to the later Purāṇic stories explaining the origins of a horse-headed being. Even if antecedents to the Hayagrīva figure can be theoretically traced back to the Vedic literature, such as the references to the Vedic horse sacrifice (*aśva-yajña*) and the beheading of Viṣṇu, there are no explicit references to the horse-headed figure Hayagrīva in that literature.

Interestingly, of all the texts surveyed for the present study, only the

very late Śaiva and Śākta texts (*Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*) actually incorporate the story from the Vedic literature about the beheading sacrifice (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*) as an explanation as to how Viṣṇu obtained a horse-head. This limited reference suggests that one cannot simply assume, as O'Flaherty does in using the structural approach, that the Vedas contain the antecedent to the particular Hindu deity of Hayagrīva. That the antecedent may lie in the Vedas may well be correct. However, since the desire for Vedic legitimacy is otherwise very strong in such texts as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, one would have expected these Purāṇas to have mentioned this Vedic connection if it were at all believable to Vaiṣṇavas as an explanation. It is significant that these texts do not make such a Vedic connection.

It seems also speculative to assume, as Jaiswal does, that just because one finds the existence of the worship of a horse-headed deity in a particular region such as at Maṇikūṭa Hill, Assam—even if substantiated by very late texts such as the *Kālikā Purāṇa* and *Yoginī Tantra*—one can conclude that Hayagrīva originated in the tribal region of Assam. No doubt, there has been considerable interaction between the pan-Indian tradition and other religious streams (beliefs and practices); however, it is conjectural to indicate a *precise* and *singular* origin for the horse-headed god. In fact, given the multiplicity of horse-headed figures in the Epics and Purāṇas, it seems quite reasonable to assume that there may have been several independent origins. Furthermore, if the myth of the horse-headed figure was widespread among the non-Vedic peoples, it is plausible that myths regarding the deity/demon could have also differed; that is to say, one cannot necessarily assume a unified system of beliefs and motifs among non-Vedic groups, even though there may have been at the same time some interaction among them.

1.2. *Myth in the Epics and Purāṇas*

The depictions of Hayagrīva in the pan-Indian epic *Mahābhārata* are both of the benevolent *avatāra* of Viṣṇu and of a horse-headed demon. In contrast, the *Harivaṃśa* provides only malevolent depictions of a horse-headed demon, who is specifically an enemy of Kṛṣṇa. In the pan-Indian Purāṇas also, there are variant depictions of Hayagrīva—a benevolent *avatāra* of Viṣṇu (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*), a malevolent depiction of a horse-headed being (*Brahma Purāṇa*, *Skanda Purāṇa*), an unsynthesized depiction of the horse-headed figure as both benevolent and malevolent (*Agni Purāṇa*,

Bhāgavata Purāṇa), and, finally, a synthesis of both the malevolent and benevolent forms of Hayagrīva (*Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Kālika Purāṇa*).

   Issuing out of certain common constituent elements, different depictions of Hayagrīva became the basis of separate '*histories*' of the deity. One can distinguish between (1) the same, or largely the same, set of constituent elements, and (2) the different depictions formed out of variant combinations of these very elements. This is what the kaleidoscope does, and that is why the kaleidoscope analogy helps us understand the complexity of Hinduism. At the same time, the different depictions come to serve as the foundation for separate 'histories' or 'trajectories'. Using the kaleidoscope analogy, it appears that, on the basis of the wide variety of texts surveyed for the present study, one can only speak in the plural of the '*histories*' of the horse-headed figure known as Hayagrīva , rather than a single unilinear history (benevolent to malevolent to a synthesis of the two) as the structuralists have worked out.

   The analysis of the passages on Hayagrīva in the Epic and Purāṇic literature sheds light on the relation of mythic transformation to the development of religious traditions. In terms of the development of the 'Vaiṣṇava history' of Hayagrīva, the most important feature contained in the Epic and Purāṇic corpus is that Hayagrīva is both included in several of the Purāṇic lists of *avatāras* and is specifically mentioned as the benevolent horse-headed form that Viṣṇu takes in order to recover the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. There is no synthesis of the benevolent and malevolent forms of Hayagrīva in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas (as there is in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Kālika Purāṇa*). Nor do the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas ever mention the origins of Hayagrīva's horse-head (as do *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*)! On the other hand, in the case of the Vaiṣṇava *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, one finds that its Advaitic orientation allows it to contain myths about both the benevolent and malevolent forms of a horse-headed figure. For, in the Advaitic world-view all forms are part of the realm of *māyā*. Here, however, the malevolent form remains unconnected to the benevolent form.

1.3. *Iconography in the Āgamas and Purāṇas*

Texts belonging to the Vaiṣṇava Āgamic tradition provide pertinent information about deities, especially about their mantraic and iconographical features and their locus in the temples. Although there is decidedly ambiguity as to Hayagrīva's theological status in relation to

Viṣṇu in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (i.e., whether he is a primary [*mukhya*] or a secondary [*gauṇa*] form), he is nonetheless consistently depicted as a benevolent form of Viṣṇu (never as a demon!). In several Āgamas, he is presented as an emanation from a *vyūha-avatāra*; but the Āgamas are contradictory in that one depicts him as emanating from Aniruddha (*Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*), while others describe him as emanating from Saṃkarṣaṇa (*Viśvāmitra* and *Padma Saṃhitās*). Importantly, he is also frequently depicted not only as the one who recovered the Vedas, but who is the very form of the Vedas.

Interestingly, notwithstanding the ambiguity regarding Hayagrīva's theological status, there appears to be more consistency in respect of the ritual practice surrounding him, particularly his locus in the temple (north or northeastern direction). Various forms are permissible according to the iconographical prescriptions for him (whether he should be depicted with four or eight arms bearing different elements, and so forth): some of Hayagrīva's iconographical features are continuous with the features of Viṣṇu (i.e., bearing the *cakra* and *śaṅkha*), whereas others are associated with his unique role as the one who recovers the Vedas (i.e., bearing the *pustaka* and having one hand in the position of wisdom [*jñāna-mudrā*]).

Although no depictions of Hayagrīva were located in the Śaiva texts surveyed, there are nonetheless similarities with him in the way the Dakṣiṇāmūrti form of Śiva is functionally and iconographically depicted; in other words, the theological and ritual function of Hayagrīva and Dakṣiṇāmūrti is the same even though the gods differ. Furthermore, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, like Hayagrīva, is described as bearing the *padma*, *akṣa-mālā*, *pustaka* and *jñāna-mudrā*, and is also revered as the Expounder of wisdom and the Śāstras.

By way of contrast, there are several references to Hayagrīva in the later Śākta (Āgamic) texts. Although Hayagrīva is described therein as a benevolent deity with iconographical features similar to those found in the Pañcaratra Āgamas, he is consistently depicted as a minor auxillary deity in the Śākta texts, wherein the goddess is Supreme.

1.4. *The Regional Temple in Tamil Nadu*

Included among the various depictions of Hayagrīva are those from the local worship of Hayagrīva at Tiruvahīndrapuram in the region of Tamil Nadu. There are references to Hayagrīva in South India prior to Vedānta Deśika (the Āḻvār hymns, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Bhaṭṭar's *Śrīraṅgarāja*

Stava), which depict Him as a benevolent *avatāra* of Viṣṇu who recovered the Vedas from Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Significantly, there are two iconic images of Hayagrīva present at the Devanātha Temple at Tiruvahīndra-puram—a temple associated with Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, who explicitly refers to the god—where Deśika is said to have performed his religious and meditative practices. Although there are several references to the deity prior to the life of Deśika (Nammāḻvār, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar), Hayagrīva became more popular in Tamil Nadu principally because of the influence of Vedānta Deśika and his *Hayagrīva Stotra*.

Consequent to Deśika's *stotra* and the growing popularity of Hayagrīva worship, the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple was built at Tiruvahīndrapuram, wherein Hayagrīva, accompanied by His consort Śrī Lakṣmī, is the presiding deity. The three Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns (*Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti*, *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti*, and *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana*)—all of which are meant to be recited in front of an icon—not only provide explicit depictions of Hayagrīva's iconic incarnation as the full form of God, but also request that He bestow mundane fruits (like the power of speech) as well as *mokṣa*. Importantly, Śrīvaiṣṇavas take refuge only with the full form of God. That Śrīvaiṣṇavas take refuge with Hayagrīva is explicitly evident in the *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti*, in which each refrain mentions taking refuge with Hayagrīva.

These later regional hymns in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition in Tamil Nadu do not emphasize the myth of Hayagrīva's *vibhava-avatāra* per se, a form that appears only at a specific place and time. Rather, the pan-Indian Epic and Purāṇic myths about Hayagrīva, as the One who recovers the Vedas, simply provide the scope for the depictions of His iconic form (carrying the Vedas) or His image in ritual hymns as Protector of the devotees. Thus, myth as such is not the central element in Śrīvaiṣṇavism.

1.5. *Linking the Local Sectarian and Pan-Indian Traditions: The Role of the Short Āgamic Ritual Texts*

We have noted that no Vaiṣṇava text relates Hayagrīva to the Vedas through the myth of Dadhyañc. However, the five short ritual texts in praise of Hayagrīva, which follow the Āgamic tradition and are used by Śrīvaiṣṇavas, attempt to link Him to the Vedas by means of the imitative employment of traditional Vedic authoritative literary genres. This is a common practice found in sectarian literature in order to legitimize (or celebrate) new religious developments. *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad* and *Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma*

Arcanā are examples of this quest for pan-Indian legitimation. They
endeavour to relate the newer regional beliefs concerning the deity
Hayagrīva's supremacy back to the Vedas, even as they clearly establish
Hayagrīva as a full *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

The content of several of these short ritual texts also provides evidence of
the influence of the pan-Indian Āgamic traditions on the local sectarian
Śrīvaiṣṇava theme of Hayagriva as Supreme. Indeed, *Hayagrīva Kavaca
Anyat* and *Hayagrīva Pañjara*, based on Pāñcarātra Āgamic ritual, are used
by Śrīvaiṣṇavas in the worship of, and devotion to, Hayagrīva. *Kavaca* and
pañjara are two literary genres typical of the Āgamic tradition, whereby
spiritual power (*śakti*) is associated with words (*śabda*). The power generated
through the recitation of the *kavacas* and *pañjaras* is believed to neutralize
evil power or influences. Specifically recited for protection and the
attainment of power, the texts celebrate Hayagrīva as Supreme. They depict
Him not only as the Protector of the world against the demons Madhu and
Kaiṭabha, but also as the Protector of His devotees.

In summary, the *kaleidoscopic analogy* enables us to understand and
appreciate the profound and abundant variety and diversity in the depictions
of the horse-headed Hayagrīva figure in Hinduism. A survey of the
mythological stories from the Epics and Purāṇas and the iconographical
references from the Āgamic texts—and as well the examination of
developments in the understanding of Hayagrīva in the regional Śrīvaiṣṇava
literature and local temple milieu—demonstrate, from the perspective of the
history of religions, how misleading it would be to attempt to understand the
development of a deity in a simple unilinear manner. The kaleidoscopic
perspective serves as a useful tool in highlighting the many 'histories' of
Hayagrīva. However, to understand the particular history in respect of
Hayagrīva as the Lord of Light and Learning in Tamil Nadu requires a
different approach (see below).

2. THE REVERSE-PRISMATIC PERSPECTIVE:
REGIONAL DEPICTION OF A PAN-INDIAN DEITY

Because of the variety and complexity of developments in Hindu mythology,
iconography and ritual, one needs a *different* conceptual tool to adequately
understand the evolution of the regional Śrīvaiṣṇava 'history' of Hayagrīva.
As seen in Chapter Six, I believe that the most suitable conceptual tool for the
purpose is the *reverse-prismatic perspective*, which is particularly useful in
comprehending Vedānta Deśika's specific depiction of Hayagrīva in the

Hayagrīva Stotra. Interestingly, the employment of this perspective in respect of the development of the horse-headed deity Hayagrīva sheds considerable new light on the relation and interaction between pan-Indian Hinduism and local Śrīvaiṣṇavism in Tamil Nadu. This conceptual tool further reinforces the notion that, just as there are many 'histories' of the deity, so too there is a distinctive *Śrīvaiṣṇava history* of Hayagrīva.

Among the several disparate myths present within the pan-Indian texts, Śrīvaiṣṇavas make reference *only* to the myth that describes Hayagrīva's benevolent act of recovering the Vedas from the demons for the welfare of his devotees (*Mahābhārata*, *Agni Purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). Hence, Śrīvaiṣṇavas depict Hayagrīva as a wholly benevolent *avatāra*, in conformity with the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition's understanding of the wholly benevolent nature of Viṣṇu.

Śrīvaiṣṇavas show no concern at all for the other aspects of the Hayagrīva myth, such as, for example, the etiology of Hayagrīva's horse-head. It is only the later Śaiva and Śākta texts that incorporate the paradigm of the beheading sacrifice (as described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*) into their history of Hayagrīva. There are a few references to the myth of the recovery of the Vedas in Vedānta Deśika's *stotra*, but the myth about Hayagrīva's *avatāric* act is not the central focus. Although references to the Epic and Purāṇic myth of the benevolent god are few, the myth of Hayagrīva as recovering the Vedas and killing the demons provides the scope, however, for the Śrīvaiṣṇava depictions of Hayagrīva as the form of the Vedas, the Lord of Learning, the Protector of all the devotees, and the Bestower of *mokṣa*.

2.1. *Myth in the Service of Theology*

Two divergent approaches have frequently been employed in the study of myth in Hinduism: (1) the textual-critical, and (2) the structural. The classical critical-textual approach attempts to reconstruct the history of an 'authentic' myth in the Epic and Purāṇic texts. This approach encounters serious problems, however, in view of the complexity among Indian religions, their diversity, and the presence of an oral tradition. Particularly daunting for this approach are the difficulties in respect of the many interpolations, additions and substitutions in the religious texts over time. Moreover, one cannot assume that there is one correct and fixed version of a myth; in the subject under study here, as we have seen, there are many versions of the horse-headed figure. Meanwhile, the 'modified' textual-critical approach attempts to reconstruct the relative chronology of the variants of Epic and Purāṇic

myths through an analysis of the religious terminology and then relates the variants to the many religious streams. This approach has proven useful in the study of terminological, and therefore religious, developments (Hacker). The works of authors using this approach has, among other approaches, been valuable to the present study in providing the religio-historical context in which to situate development regarding Hayagrīva.

In contrast to the textual-critical approach, the structural approach seeks to delineate the underlying structure of all the variants of a particular myth in the literature. This approach was developed by Lévi-Strauss and has been employed most effectively in the study of myth in Hinduism by Biardeau and O'Flaherty. It involves the determination of continuity in thematic patterns and motifs through indexing parts of the story. In regard to Hayagrīva, O'Flaherty sees three phases in the development of the myth in which the story of a benevolent figure and the story of a malevolent figure are finally synthesized into a single figure. Useful as it may be for the study of comparative myth, however, the structural approach seems reductive and acontextual in assuming that everything fits into a single pattern of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. In tracing the Epic and Purāṇic myths in the present study for a better understanding of the development of the deity Hayagrīva, it emerges that neither approach, in and of itself, provides an adequate understanding either of myth or of Hinduism, given the complex nature of the development of both myth and Hinduism.

The structural approach was originally developed for the study of myth in pre-literate folk societies. Accordingly, it suffers from inherent limitations when applied to literate, self-conscious civilizations with highly developed philosophical and theological systems. In the latter, myth is frequently purposively adapted to serve the particular theological agendas of different religious streams rather than simply evolving autonomously in a unilinear manner. Vaiṣṇavas (as evident in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*), and even more so Śrīvaiṣṇavas (including Deśika in his depiction of Hayagrīva), have a primarily theological world-view, wherein myth is subservient to their larger theological understanding! As a consequence, there is conscious selectivity in what is taken from the vast complexity of Hinduism.

For Vaiṣṇavas (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*), Hayagrīva is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu and thus can only be benevolent in nature. Furthermore, because Hayagriva is Viṣṇu's *avatāra*, there is no need of an explanation of his horse-head, for Viṣṇu has taken a wide variety of animal, animal-human, and human forms at different times and places to restore the *dharma.* Since one would have expected Śrīvaiṣṇavism to make a serious attempt to gain Vedic legitimacy, it is significant that Śrīvaiṣṇavas do not explain the etiology of Hayagrīva's horse-

head by linking it with the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mythic strand of the beheading of Dadhyañc (as has been done in *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*). The Western interpretation of the paradigm of beheading (as by Courtright in the case of Gaṇeśa) as a means of incorporating a demon into the pantheon of Hindu gods has little meaning in the Vaiṣṇava history of the deity. In fact, Vaiṣṇavas ignore it altogether as it would undermine the wholly benevolent nature of Viṣṇu. That Viṣṇu might have a demonic past, wherein he has to be sacrificed for the placement of the 'real' head, is completely outside the Vaiṣṇava world-view.

2.2. *Topotheism: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Understanding of Viṣṇu's Forms*

The iconographical depictions of Hayagrīva in Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* and the later Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns are continuous with the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. The Pāñcarātra Āgamas depict Hayagrīva as having emblems based on both general Viṣṇu-iconography as well as specific features. The specific features that are important and found in the Pāñcarātric tradition—the bearing of the book of knowledge/wisdom (*vijñāna-pustaka*), hands in the position of the *jñāna-mudrā*, and holding the rosary beads (*akṣa-mālā*)—all interplay with Hayagrīva's association with the Vedas and speech. Vedānta Deśika and Śrīvaiṣṇavism as a whole have followed the Āgamas in their depictions of Hayagrīva's iconic form. However, the ambiguity with regards to Hayagrīva's theological status that is contained in the Āgamas is emphatically replaced by a consistent portrayal of Him as a full form of Viṣṇu in the hymns of two Āḻvārs (Nammāḻvār and Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār) and the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas Parāśara Bhaṭṭar and Vedānta Deśika.

The various Śrīvaiṣṇava devotional compositions (*Hayagrīva Aṣṭottara Sat Nāma Arcanā*, *Śrī Hayagrīva Mūla Mantra Stuti*, *Śrī Lakṣmī Hayavadana Prapatti*, and *Śrī Hayagrīva Abhigamana*) that have appropriated Āgamic ritual are, through placing it in a Śrīvaiṣṇava theological context, continuous with the *Hayagrīva Stotra* in that they both bring out Hayagrīva's association with the Vedas and sacred speech and, more importantly, establish Him as a full form of the Supreme. Hayagrīva is associated with the Vedas through the references made to Him as the source of the Supreme Syllable (*Oṃ*) and the Vedas, as well as to His benevolent act of recovering the Vedas.

Although Hayagrīva's association with the Vedas and sacred speech in the devotional hymns is similar to that contained in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*, the latter differs from the former in that the *stotra* also incorporates Āḻvār emotionalism and requests for the delight of God's presence, rather than for

protection alone. Nonetheless, both the hymns and the *Hayagrīva Stotra* depict Him as the Supreme who bestows wisdom on His devotees, and liberates them from *saṃsāra*. Deśika depicts and reveres Hayagrīva as being in the form of knowledge (*jñāna*) and bliss (*ānanda*). According to Śrīvaiṣṇavism, this form is the essential nature (*svarūpa*) of Viṣṇu and thus establishes Hayagrīva as a 'full' *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Unlike the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, Deśika and later Śrīvaiṣṇavas explicitly depict Hayagrīva as granting devotees both mundane fruits and *mokṣa* (liberation)—indicative of His status as Supreme.

In Śrīvaiṣṇavism, the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu appears in a variety of forms at specific regions/places, with each form having the same theological status as the others, a phenomenon that I have termed *topotheism. Topotheism* is evident in the development of Hayagrīva's status and role in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. In fact, although the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas (including Bhaṭṭar and Vedānta Deśika) praise each of the five forms of God (i.e., *para, vyūha, antaryāmin, vibhava* and *arcā*), their praise is most often directed to the *icon*. Indeed, following Tirumaṅkai Ālvār who links Hayagrīva with the iconic Lords of Tiruvaḷūntūr and Naṅkūr, Bhaṭṭar links the deity Hayagrīva with the iconic Lord at Śrīraṅgam. Thus, the mainstream Epic and Purāṇic tradition of myth is not of primary concern for them (though it may be alluded to because the *arcā*, being the full form of the Supreme, is connected to all of Viṣṇu's *vibhava-avatāras*). Though the reference to Hayagrīva as a *vibhava-avatāra* is often made, the horse-headed deity is mainly depicted by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as *arcā-avatāra* in the later devotion to Hayagrīva at Tiruvahīndrapuram.

As an outgrowth of Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* and his association (whether historical or partially legendary) with Tiruvahīndra-puram, Hayagrīva appears at the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple, accompanied by His consort Śrī Lakṣmī, as the presiding deity. The later Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns celebrate Hayagrīva's incarnation in an icon as the full form of Viṣṇu, a God before whom one may perform the ultimate and salvific act of *prapatti* as well as the daily morning ritual called *abhigamana*. Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* and the later Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns are meant to be chanted in front of the icon, and explicitly refer to Hayagrīva as the Supreme Lord who grants both mundane fruits as well as *mokṣa*.

2.3. *Continuity in Theological and Ritual Functions*

Interestingly, the depictions of Hayagrīva (both iconographically and functionally) are manifest in a form parallel to those of other gods. Although

I encountered no references to Hayagrīva in the Śaiva Āgamic texts, the images of Dakṣiṇāmūrti—who is described as bearing the *padma*, *akṣa-mālā*, *pustaka* and *jñāna-mudrā* and is also revered as the Expounder of wisdom and the Śāstras—are remarkably similar to the Pāñcarātric depictions of Hayagrīva. Functionally, one could call Dakṣiṇāmūrti, like Hayagrīva, the Lord of Learning. His role as Expounder of the Śāstras is expressed through the same iconographical emblems as Hayagrīva's.

Similarly, it is noteworthy that the worship of Hayagrīva at the Swami Hayagrīva Temple at Tiruvahīndrapuram appears to be functionally equivalent to that of the pan-Indian goddess Sarasvatī. Instead of the devotees worshipping the non-Vaiṣṇava Sarasvatī for the grace of learning, they turn to Hayagrīva. This change is reinforced by the interplay of Hayagrīva with the goose in the *One Hundred and Eight Names of Hayagrīva*. Both Hayagrīva and Sarasvatī are connected with the goose, which is a pan-Indian symbol of wisdom and learning. In order to emphasize the greatness of Hayagrīva as the Lord of Learning, Hayagrīva takes on the attributes of wisdom/discernment by being referred to as *haṃsa*, 'Goose' (n. 99), and *paramahaṃsa*, the 'Supreme Goose' (n. 100).

2.4. *The Śrīvaiṣṇava Personalization of Mantra and the Selective Transformation of Pāñcarātric Theology*

Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* appears to selectively transform and expand several elements from the Pāñcarātric tradition. The Vedic and Tantric elements of Hayagrīva, as drawn from the Pāñcarātra Āgamas and clearly observed in the *Hayagrīva Upaniṣad*, are considerably more personalized in the *Hayagrīva Stotra*. We see in the *stotra* the Śrīvaiṣṇava expansion of Pāñcarātra's abstract linkage of mantra and deity, along with the incorporation of Tamil emotional devotionalism. The result is a more emotional tradition that directs itself towards a more personalized icon/God with whom the devotee cultivates an intimate relationship.

Mantra is an abstract concept which, in the context of Pāñcarātric meditation, is both the means to, and the goal of, salvation. Likewise, God's incarnation in an icon, in the context of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, is the same means and goal of every devotee. Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra*, as well as the three later Śrīvaiṣṇava hymns, personalize the deity Hayagrīva, enabling the devotee to have a more emotional and personal relationship with Him.

Furthermore, the process by which the deity Hayagrīva evolved into the 'Lord of Light and Learning' amply illustrates Śrīvaiṣṇava selectivity in its

employment of Pāñcarātric theology. Although Vedānta Deśika's *stotra* does not appear to recognize Hayagrīva as an emanation from a *vyūha*, in his poem Hayagrīva is especially endowed with the specific qualities of the *vyūha* Aniruddha (splendour) and the *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa (knowledge, and teacher of the *Śāstras*), the two emanations from which He is contradictorily claimed to have originated in several Pāñcarātra Āgamas.

Vedānta Deśika's poem vividly demonstrates the highly selective blending of images and ideas from the pan-Indian myths of the Epics and Purāṇas with the more sectarian works based on the Pāñcarātra Āgamas and the Āḻvārs. It is this synthesis that provided the scope for Hayagrīva's position as presiding deity, worshipped in the Swāmi Hayagrīva Temple in Tiruvahīndrapuram, Tamil Nadu.

Thus, the *reverse-prismatic perspective* sheds light not only on the manner in which Hayagrīva's status as the full form of God took place through the confluence of several religious streams (Epic and Purāṇic myth, Pāñcarātra Āgamic iconography and ritual practice, Āḻvār *bhakti*, and iconic presence in the temple), but also on the high degree of *selectivity* in the process of popularizing an ambiguous and relatively minor deity to full status as the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Although the deity Hayagrīva has many '*histories*', as Supreme Lord (even though primarily of local interest) His Śrīvaiṣṇava history is founded on Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* and His association with Tiruvahīndrapuram. In truth, it could be said that here we see an ironic kind of reversal of relationships: Hayagrīva is a God who attains His popularity because of the great reverence in which His devotee—Vedānta Deśika—is held by the Vaṭakalai sect of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, rather than Deśika as a poet and logician being revered for his association with the God Hayagrīva.

3. Summing Up

As is evident in the study of even a single deity, Hinduism manifests enormous complexity. Such complexity, indeed one characterized by contradiction, is on display in the analysis of the references to, and depictions of, the deity Hayagrīva in the three-fold corpus of Hindu texts. Largely from a given set of constituent elements, a multiplicity of depictions have, as if in a kaleidoscope, been developed. In the face of the profusion of depictions of the deity, it would be difficult to remain true to the religious literature and simultaneously maintain that there is a unilinear history of this deity. Rather, there are present here many different histories. At the same time, the study shows that any single particular history of the deity, as in the case of

Śrīvaiṣṇavism, is not necessarily reflective of some self-generated autonomous process of development, but is one often marked by self-conscious selectivity to fit the particular world-view of the given branch of Hinduism. The Śrīvaiṣṇavas elevated a minor pan-Indian deity to the full form of Viṣṇu, the Supreme God. Vedānta Deśika's *Hayagrīva Stotra* represents the epitome of this transformation through synthesizing many depictions of Hayagrīva. Indeed, by his single-minded devotion to the deity, Deśika was highly influential in the subsequent Vaṭakalai popularization of the worship of Hayagrīva in South India, which led to the establishment of the Hayagrīva Temple in Tiruvahīndrapuram. In turn, the selective portrayal of Hayagrīva as Supreme in South Indian worship was then linked back to the pan-Indian level through the use of traditional literary genres, adding in the process to the earlier complexity of Hinduism.

GLOSSARY

abhigamana	approaching God; the ritual of approaching God with devotion each morning
Ācārya	teacher or master
Advaita Vedānta	non-duality; name of a school of Vedānta founded by Śaṅkara
Āgama	source; name of a class of pan-Indian sectarian texts
agni-vajra	fire-bolt
akam	literally meaning interior; literary genre of Tamil love poetry
akṣara	sacred syllable
akṣa-mālā	rosary of beads
akṣa-sūtra	string of beads
Āḻvār	poet; group of Tamil poets
amalatva	taintless
aṃśa-avatāra	partial incarnation
ānanda	bliss
anantatva	infiniteness
Aniruddha	one of the four cosmic emanations (*vyūhas*) of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu
aṅkuśa	staff, hook, goad
antaryāmin	Visnu as the Indweller of the human heart; Inner Controller
Āraṇyakas	a class of speculative texts in the Vedic corpus
arcā-avatāra	iconic incarnation of God
asura	one belonging to what was originally considered as a class of gods in the *Ṛg Veda* but later considered as a class of demons
aśva-yajña	horse-sacrifice, a central ritual described in the Vedas

ātman	eternal soul
avatāra	incarnation of God
bala	strength
Bhadrāśva	refers to the north of the country lying east of Ilāvṛta, one of the divisions of the known world (comprising the highest and most central part of the old country)
Bhāgavad Gīta	one of the most popular Hindu religious texts; a portion of the epic *Mahābhārata*
Bhakti	devotion
bhoktṛatva	soul's capacity to enjoy
bīja-mantra	key mantra of a deity
brahmā-utsava	an annual Hindu festival marking the day of the consecration of a temple or of its icon
Brahman	the underlying principle of Reality
Brāhmaṇa	a class of ritual texts in the Vedic corpus
brahmin	one of the priestly class
cakra	discus
caṅkam	poetry of the Tamils during the period from 200 B.C.E., and collected ca. 700-800 C.E.
cit	consciousness
daitya	a class of demons
danava	a class of demons
darśana	view, philosophical school; visual appearance of God to the devotee
deva	shining one, deity
devatā	shining one, deity
dharma	cosmic, moral or ethical law; duty
dhyāna-śloka	verse of a hymn to meditate upon for visualizing an icon of a god in order to make one
divya-deśa	divine region, sacred place

dvāpara-yuga	the age during when only half of the world is pure
dvāra-pālaka	doorkeeper
dvija	twice born; name for people belonging to the first three classes (*brahmin*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiṣya*)
gaḍa	club, mace
gauṇa	minor, secondary
gopī	cowherdess
gopuram	temple tower
guṇa	quality, constituent that makes up the material world; the three *guṇas* are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*
guruparamparā	tradition of the gurus; hagiographies of the lineage of gurus/preceptors
haṃsa	goose; often translated as swan
Harivaṃśa	an appendix to the *Mahābhārata*
homa	sacrificial offering; fire oblation
hṛdya	essence, core; Tantric meditative genre
ijyā	the initiate receives instruction in the formal worship of God
Īśvara	Supreme God
japa	repetitious recitation of the name of God or a mantra; muttered prayer
jñāna	knowledge
kali-yuga	the dark age when three-fourths of the world is impure, sinful, and degenerate
kāmya-utsava	rites observed on special occasions and for specific reasons
karma	action, merit
kartṛtva	soul's capacity as agent
kavaca	shield; Tantric meditative genre
kṛta-yuga	the golden age when all is pure

kuṇḍa	kind of flower
Mahābhārata	one of the two classical epics in the Hindu textual tradition
mahā-purāṇa	important Purāṇa; the more original or authentic Purāṇa texts
mahā-vākya	great statements
maṇḍapa	a covered hall on temple grounds used on festive occasions
maṇḍala	circular diagram used for meditation
mantra	sacred syllable
mokṣa	salvation; liberation from the cycle of rebirths
mudrā	hand position
mukhya	major, primary
mūla-bera	immoveable, fixed image
mūla-mantra	the primary or fundamental *mantra*; the reception of the *mūla-mantra* is the fourth rite in *pañca-saṃskāra*—the five rites to be performed for initiation into Pāñcarātra practice (also used in Śrīvaiṣṇavism)
mūrti	image of god
naimittika-utsava	annual observance for special occasions, i.e., harvest, marriage
nāma-stotra	praise-poem of the names of God
Nārāyaṇa	support-place of created beings; name of Lord Viṣṇu frequently used by Śrīvaiṣṇavas
nitya-utsava	daily, weekly, or monthly rituals to be performed in a temple, also referred to as *pūjā* or *aracanā-karma*
nyāsa	the Tantric practice of placing a spiritual letter on each body part in order to purify the body
padma	lotus
pañca-saṃskāra	five simple rites of initiation into the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition (also known as the Śrīvaiṣṇava sacraments): (1) *tāpa*, the application by branding the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* emblems on the shoulders; (2) *puṇḍra*, the application of

	the forehead marks with white clay on the initiate; (3) *nāma*, naming the initiate as *Viṣṇu-dāsa* ('servant of Viṣṇu'); (4) *mantra*, the preceptor gives the esoteric Vaiṣṇava *mantras* to the initiate; and, finally, (5) *ijyā*, the initiate receives instruction in the formal worship of God (icon or *śālagrama* stones)
pañjara	cage; Tantric meditative genre
paṅkaja	lotus
para	Viṣṇu as the transcendent God who dwells in the Supreme heaven of Vaikuṇṭha
parivāra-devatā	attendant deities
pāśa	noose or rope
pātu	second person singular imperative form of Sanskrit verb root *pā* 'to protect, defend against, preserve'
phala-śruti	verse in a poem describing the fruits that one attains from the recitation of the poem
Pradyumna	one of the four cosmic emanations (*vyūhas*) of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu
prapatti	the act of self-surrender to God
pūjā	worship offering
puḷ	Tamil word for swan
puṇya	the phenomenal world
puṟam	Tamil heroic poetry
Purāṇa	ancient; a class of religious texts
puruṣottama	Supreme being or person
puruṣa	man, human, primordial being
pustaka	book
rajas	passion, excitement, activity; one of the three *guṇas*
rakṣatu	second person singular imperative form of Sanskrit verb root *rakṣ* 'to save, protect, take care'
ṚgVeda	the most important of the four Vedas, authoritative ritual text

ṛṣi	sage, wise person
śabda	word, sound, scripture
ṣaḍguṇa	six qualities of Brahman according to Pāñcarātra
Śaiva	the tradition of the Indian deity Śiva; devotee of Śiva
Śākta	the tradition of the Indian goddess Śakti; devotee of Śakti
śakti	creative energy
śālagrāma stones	sanctified petrified fossils found in river-beds of the Himālayas and used for worship
Saṃhitās	collection; group of ritual texts
Saṃkarṣaṇa	one of the four cosmic emanations (*vyūhas*) of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu
sampradāya	system of religious teaching transmitted from one teacher to another
saṃsāra	the cycle of birth, death and rebirth
śankha	conch shell
Śāstra	treatise, doctrine
sattva	being, true, pure; one of the three *guṇas*
satya	truth, reality
sauśilya	gracious condescension
siddhi	truth; accomplishment in meditation or yoga
śloka	double verse
smṛti	'that which is remembered'; refers to religious texts that were written by sages and include the Epics and Purāṇas
sphaṭika	crystal
Śrīvaiṣṇava	the tradition of Śrī and Viṣṇu in Tamil Nadu; devotee of Śrī and Viṣṇu
śrīvatsa	mole, curl; mole on Visnu's chest marking his supremacy
śruti	that which is heard; refers to the Vedas, which are regarded as revelation 'heard' by the ancient sages (*ṛṣis*).

sthala-purāṇa	ancient story of a sacred place (in Tamil known as *talapurāṇam*) containing local myths and legends
stotra	praise-poem
sūtra	thread, text of aphorisms
svādhyāya	the study of Vedic texts
svarga	heaven
svarūpa	essential nature
tamas	dark; one of the three *guṇas*
Tantra	an esoteric tradition that emphasizes specific practices using mantras and *maṇḍalas*.
tapas	heat; refers to the energy accumulated through practices of meditation
tejas	splendour
Teṉkalai	one of the sects in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, referred to as the 'Southern' school
tīrtha	pilgrimage place
treta-yuga	the age during which the world begins to deteriorate so that only three-fourths of it is pure
ubhaya-vedānta	the dual Vedas (combining the Tamil and Sanskrit Vedas)
upadāna	collection of materials for worship
Upaniṣad	the fourth and final body of Vedic literature
upa-purāṇa	the 'lesser' Purāṇa, consisting of the later and more sectarian texts
upāsana	worship
upāya	means to attain a particular goal
upeya	goal
utsava	remover of obstacles or misery; festival
utsava-bera	moveable icon for processions
vaijyantī	garland; Visnu's garland which indicates victory

Vaikuṇṭha	the Supreme heaven for Vaiṣṇavas
Vaiṣṇava	the tradition of the Indian deity Viṣṇu; devotee of Viṣṇu
varṇa	colour, class
Vāsudeva	one of the four cosmic emanations (*vyūhas*) of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu
Vaṭakalai	one of the sects in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, referred to as the 'Northern' school
Vedas	Hindu scripture (ca. 1500-500 B.C.E.) categorized as *śruti* and is regarded as sacred, authoritative and eternal; the four Vedas are *Ṛg*, *Sāma*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva*.
vibhava-avatāra	human, animal or animal-headed incarnation who appears on earth at specific times or places
vidyā	wisdom, knowledge
vihaṅgama	goose
vijñana	wisdom
vimāna-devatā	a deity placed on temple tower
vyūha	Viṣṇu's four-fold aggregate of cosmic emanations (Vāsudeva, Saṃarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha)
vyākhyāna	exposition
yajña	sacrifice; Vedic yajña has the status of being the foundation of Hindu ritual
Yajña	the personification of sacrifice
yantra	meditative diagram

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